

AMAZING STORY ^{OF THE} GREAT WAR BEGINS TO-DAY!

See Page 24.

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The Magnet

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NOW EVERY SATURDAY.



A SHOCK FOR BILLY BUNTER!

(See the Splendid Tale of Harry Wharton & Co. inside.)



This week:

Birmingham F.C.
 the team of many "ups-
 and-downs."

BIRMINGHAM is one of the lucky places in the land. The people can watch a First Division match every Saturday during the season, because there are two First Division clubs in the town. That isn't new news, of course, but it is just as well to remember the fact just now, because the experience of the two clubs is so widely different.

Aston Villa, one of the First Division sides with its home in Birmingham, has won so many honours on the football field that it is almost difficult to count them. League championships no end have come their way, and they have also won the Cup on more occasions than any other club in the country.

Alas, the other Birmingham club, which bears the name of the town, has always occupied a back seat. Never once has the club team won the championship of the First Division, and never once has the name Birmingham been inscribed on the English Cup. One of these days this reproach to Birmingham will be removed.

Loyal to the Players!

Meantime, the club just jogs on, and here I am going to tell you about the players who just now are looking for the turning in the lane. First of all, though, it should be mentioned that Birmingham recently passed its fiftieth birthday as a football club. They were not always known as Birmingham, though. In the dim and distant days they were called the Small Heath Alliance, the club having sprung, as many another big football club sprung, out of a cricket club.

In 1905 the move was made to the present ground known as St. Andrews, and at the same time it was decided to take on the much bigger sounding name of Birmingham. Of ups and downs there have been plenty since then, and the days of championship winnings do not yet appear to be in sight. Perhaps the one thing which prevents Birmingham from making a bigger stir in the football world is loyalty to the players who have given long service. If that is a fault, then we can say that it is a good fault. Anyway, many of the players of the Birmingham side have served the club faithfully and well for many years.

A Safe Custodian!

By way of example, take the defensive portion of the team. Whatever else you may say about it, you certainly cannot say that it suffers from lack of experience. There is Dan Tremelling, the goalkeeper, who has been holding the fort for "Brum" ever since the War, with injuries the only thing which have interrupted his service. I won't say that there is no goalkeeper better than Tremelling, who waited so long for a cap, but I will say that there are few better men in the position in football today. Tremelling was honoured with a place in the England team in November.

Although Joseph Smith, the right full-back is a comparatively recent recruit at St. Andrews, he is also a player of experience, having previously served for many years with another Midland side, West Bromwich Albion. He has played for England. Frank Womack, the other full-back whom the club most frequently calls upon, has also appeared in representative games. Frank is the captain of the side—a talkative skipper, too, but he can at least say that he ought to have something to talk about, for he is one of the few players who have been with any one club long enough to have qualified for three benefits. That means over fifteen years continuous play. Sheffield is the place where Frank was born, but Birmingham is the place he has adopted, and it will seem a strange Birmingham team when the day comes when Frank of the curly locks is not in it.

Never Say Die!

Another player who has never appeared for any other first-class club is Richard Armstrong Dale, who often occupies the right-half position. He comes from that most fruitful of all counties in the football sense—Durham. He is a strong, never-say-die tackler, even if he does not always back up as consistently as he might do.

A tip-top pivot is James Cringan, the never-tired. A strange story is told about him. He was recommended to Sunderland as a forward, and was given trials as a forward in the Sunderland side. They didn't think a great deal of him, so he went to Birmingham. There he told them he preferred the centre-half berth; he was given his chance, and took it with both hands, as they say. He is Scotch, and among his proud possessions is a medal which he won as a member of Scotland's champion quoits team.

Another Birmingham player with a Sunderland connection is James Liddell, who can hold his own either on the left or the right in the half-back line. He was born at Sunderland, but after the War, in which he gained a commission, he had trials with three clubs—Arsenal, South Shields, and Sheffield Wednesday, ere fixing up with Birmingham.

Skillful Forwards!

That caps come the way of the Birmingham players should be mentioned.

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THE BOYS OF BIRMINGHAM.



Reading from left to right photo shows: Back row.—S. Scholey (trainer), Dale, Smith, Bryce, Tremelling, Oaks, Hibbs. Middle row.—Bond, Briggs, Barton, Womack, Leslie, Cringan, Johnson. Front row.—Liddell, Harris, Crosbie, Bradford.

THEY WOULDN'T BELIEVE HIM! Nothing rouses the ire of William George Bunter more than when he tells the truth and nobody will believe him. Certainly, no one is prepared to "swallow" his latest yarn, which concerns an escaped convict with a price on his head!



A Magnificent New Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars.
By **FRANK RICHARDS.**

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Wet!

"IT'S wet!"
"What?"
"Wet!" snorted Billy Bunter.
"That," said Bob Cherry gravely, "must be because it's raining. I've noticed before that it's wet when it rains."

Harry Wharton & Co. chuckled. Billy Bunter did not chuckle. He snorted indignantly.

"It's cold!" he growled.
"Cold?" repeated Bob.
"Yes; horrid cold!"

"Put that down to January," said Bob. "Cold is not uncommon in January. I've noticed that before, too."

"You silly ass!" hooted Bunter.

"What's the good of grouching, Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton. "I suppose you're no wetter and colder than we are?"

Snort, from Bunter.

The remark seemed to him frivolous. That the chums of the Remove were wet and cold that stormy January evening was a matter which, perhaps, concerned themselves, but did not concern William George Bunter in the very least. What really mattered was, that William George was wet and cold. That circumstance transcended in importance anything else that was going on in the wide universe at the moment.

There was no doubt that it was very wet, and very cold. The rain was coming down hard, and through the rain a bitter winter wind blew. Harry Wharton & Co. had turned up their coat collars, and they tramped through wind and rain and mud as cheerfully as they could. But it was not Bunter's way to take the little troubles of life cheerfully. His grouching was long and loud.

"Look here, I'm fed up with this!" he snorted.

"Tell it to stop raining!" suggested Johnny Bull.
"Beast!"

"How many miles to the lodge now, Harry?" asked Frank Nugent

"Not more than one."

"Ow! One's enough."

"The enoughfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, through his chattering teeth. "But what cannot be cured must go longest to the well, as the English proverb says."

"I say, you fellows——"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I tell you I'm fed up!" hooted Bunter. "I'm not going on through this. We've got to find shelter somewhere. It's raining cats and dogs. Ow! The beastly water's trickling down my beastly neck! It's all your fault, Wharton."

"Mine?" ejaculated Harry.

"Walking three miles to see a beastly football match!" groaned Bunter. "Just like you silly chumps! Oh dear!"

"Why, you fat bounder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We should have been home before this, if you hadn't taken root in a bun-shop and refused to move."

"I suppose I had to have a snack after standing two hours in the cold, Bob Cherry. Why couldn't we have a taxi back?"

"Why couldn't you stand the taxi?" suggested Bob.

"Beast!"

"Oh, come on, Bunter," growled Johnny Bull. "It's wet, and grouching won't make it dry."

"Beast!"

Certainly Billy Bunter's grouching had no perceptible effect on the weather. The rain was just as wet, and the wind was just as cold. But it must have afforded the Owl of Greyfriars some relief, for his fat chin did not cease from troubling, and allow the weary to be at rest. It was obviously Bunter's opinion that the weather had no right to act in this unpleasant manner when he was taking his walks abroad.

"Call this a holiday!" moaned Bunter.

"Come on."

"I'm jolly glad I'm going home to-morrow."

"And so say all of us!" sang Bob Cherry, and there was a chuckle from the Co.

"Beast!"

"Look here, it's downhill now," said Bob. "Suppose we turn Bunter on his beam-ends, and roll him home like a barrel?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Co.

"Like the idea, Bunter?"

"Beast!" howled Bunter.

"Pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag and smile!" suggested Bob. Bunter did not smile.

He groaned.

"You could have telephoned to Wharton Lodge for the car, Wharton. If you fellows had been my guests at Bunter Court, I should have phoned for the Rolls."

"If any!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here, you beasts, I'm not going on through this!" roared Bunter. "I'm wet! I'm cold! I'm soaked! I'm freezing! We've got to find shelter somewhere, see?"

And Billy Bunter came to a determined halt in the muddy lane.

"Oh, come on, Bunter."

"Shan't!"

"Look here——"

"Beast!"

"Oh, leave him to it!" growled Johnny Bull. "He's getting a wash, anyhow, and he can do with one."

Harry Wharton paused.

William George Bunter was his guest at Wharton Lodge; and though he was undoubtedly a very troublesome and extraordinary guest, still he was a guest, of sorts.

Standing still in the drenching rain was not agreeable. But Wharton's comrades stopped when he did.

"Is there any shelter, Harry?" asked Nugent. "You know the country better than we do."

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The lane ran between a deep wood on one side, and a high park wall on the other. In the wood there was little shelter; the rain swamped and soaked among the leafless trees.

"Better keep on," said Harry, "I remember there's a wood-cutter's hut some distance off the road here, but—but—"

"That's better than nothing!" groaned Bunter.

"It will be cold and damp, and this rain may last for hours," said Wharton. "Much better push on."

"I'm not going on."

"Now, look here, Bunter, have a little sense—"

"I won't take another step!" roared Bunter.

"Silly ass!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Beast!"

"You fellows keep on," said Harry. "It's up to me to stick to Bunter, but you needn't bother. Keep on, and I'll look after the fat chump."

"Rats!" said Bob. "Sink or swim together. Where's the giddy hut?"

"No, keep on," said Harry. "You'll be at the lodge in twenty minutes now. Leave Bunter to me."

"Better take him by the ears and yank him along," grunted Johnny Bull. "Yah!"

"Cut on," said Harry, as cheerfully as he could. "I'll take Bunter to the hut."

And after a little demurr, four members of the Co. tramped on through the driving rain, and Harry Wharton was left with the Owl of the Remove on his hands.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Any Port in a Storm!

HARRY WHARTON turned from the lane into an opening of the drenched wood. Billy Bunter, with a deep groan, followed him. Under the trees the rain fell a little less thickly, and there was some shelter from the searching wind. But it was wet and cold and dark and dismal, and Bunter tramped on after the captain of the Greyfriars Remove in the lowest possible spirits. Wharton stared back as he heard a sudden bump and a yell.

"What the thump—"

"Yaroooh!"

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Wharton impatiently.

"Yow-ow! I fell over a blinking root or something," groaned Bunter. "I can't see in the dark, you silly idiot! Yow-ow!"

"Oh dear! Come on."

"Beast!"

Wharton tramped on again with compressed lips. Obviously the sensible thing to do was to keep on to the lodge. But he did not feel that he could leave the Owl of the Remove to his own devices. It was a comfort, at least, to reflect that Bunter was going home on the morrow. Bunter had spent the latter part of the Christmas vacation at Wharton Lodge, and had not added to the enjoyment of the little party there. It was only a few days now to the beginning of the new term; but a few days' rest from William George Bunter was likely to be grateful and comforting.

"Here we are!" said Harry, at last.

Fifty yards from the lane was the woodcutter's hut. It was simply an open shelter, where the cut wood was stacked when the trees were thinned by the woodcutters. There was a roof and three walls, but on one side it was open to wind and weather.

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The interior was black as pitch.

At one side there was a stack of faggots, but the shed was nearly empty. Wharton tramped into it, glad to be out of the rain, at least. Bunter followed him in, and howled as he stumbled over a log.

"Is this the place?" he asked, his voice fairly thrilling with indignation.

"This is it."

"Call this a shelter?"

"You silly owl!" roared Wharton, forgetting for the moment that Bunter was a guest. "Did you expect a Grand Hotel here?"

"Beast!"

Billy Bunter groped his way in. He was safe from the rain now, at least: it beat and pattered on the slanting roof, and ran off in great streams, but it did not penetrate into the hut. But the wind penetrated the open side of the shed, bitter and searching. Bunter shivered and shuddered. What he had expected was not clear, but apparently he had expected something better than this.

"Might as well have kept on, if this is what you call a shelter," he growled.

"Much better," said Harry.

"Beast!"

"Like to go on again?" asked Wharton, who had not the slightest desire to hang about in the windy shed in his wet clothes.

"No!" snorted Bunter. "This is better than nothing. Look here, Wharton, suppose you go on—"

"Well, if you don't mind being left alone—"

"And bring the car for me."

"Eh?"

"Bring the car for me."

"Oh!" said Harry.

"I know your uncle's a grumpy old joss—"

"What?"

"But I suppose he won't mind your having the car out to bring a guest home, in this frightful rain?"

There was a long pause.

If Wharton could walk to the lodge through the rain, there really seemed no reason why Bunter should not. And though Colonel Wharton was a kind and indulgent uncle, Wharton really did not want to ask him to send the car out to fetch Bunter in. But he decided on it: the rain showed no sign whatever of stopping, and the prospect of hanging about in the windy shed for hours, perhaps, was far from attractive. And Bunter evidently did not intend to walk on.

"Very well," said Harry, at last.

"And buck up," said Bunter. "I'm cold—and wet, see? Don't keep me hanging about here while you crawl. Buck up."

Harry Wharton suppressed his feelings, and left the woodcutter's hut. He tramped away in the rain and disappeared.

Bunter grunted discontentedly.

He did not want to remain alone in the dark and dismal shed: now that Wharton was gone, the darkness and solitude made him feel uneasy. But there was no help for it now.

Wharton's footsteps died away.

The rain and wind in the trees filled the air with sound, and every sound, in that lonely spot, was disquieting to Bunter, huddled alone in the darkness in the shed.

It seemed to him, after he had been alone a few minutes, that he could hear all sorts of stealthy sounds about him—sounds of whispering and creeping.

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

But he murmured under his breath. He did not dare to make the sound of

his voice heard. He was growing into a state of hopeless funk; and he wished by that time that he had not let Wharton go. But it was too late to think of that: Wharton was half-way to the lodge by that time.

Bunter, huddling and blinking in the dense gloom, listened with fearful ears, and all sorts of unpleasant fancies and ideas passed through his fat mind. Bunter was a great reader of newspapers, and he knew all about people who had been robbed and murdered in woods, and stacked in black trunks, and disposed of in similar disagreeable ways—and such things were most unpleasant to think of in his present situation.

He knew that there had been a burglary within a few miles of Wharton Lodge, and that the burglars were still at large; he knew that an escaped convict was being hunted by the police in the Surrey hills, and had not yet been recaptured. All these things, in spite of his efforts, recurred to him now, and followed one another in horrid procession through his fat mind.

The dropping of the rain sounded to him like the stealthy footsteps of those burglars who were still at large: the sough of the wind was the whispering voices of footpads, highwaymen, and motor-bandits; the creaking of the old hut was caused by the insidious creepings of escaped convicts.

Bunter had not foreseen all this when he sent Wharton away—Bunter never did foresee anything. Yet he really might have foreseen it, for experience should have taught him that he very easily got into a state of funk.

By the time Wharton had been gone ten minutes, it seemed to Bunter that he had been alone in darkness and solitude for hours and hours, and that the shadows round him had become thickly populated with footpads, bandits, and escaped convicts.

"Ow!" he ejaculated suddenly.

There was a distinct movement in the hut.

It was not imagination this time; there was a movement among the stacked faggots at one end of the little building. Three or four of them rolled to the ground.

The Owl of the Remove stood rooted to the floor. Was it a ghost, or what? His mind was filled with all sorts of weird and wonderful fancies.

Bunter told himself that it was the wind, but an icy fear crept into his heart.

A feeling came over him that he was not alone in that dim refuge from the rain; that some human being was near him, breathing in the darkness.

Some tramp, perhaps, had taken refuge there: it was likely enough. Billy Bunter blinked through the darkness towards the stack of faggots, with eyes wide distended behind his big spectacles.

There was a movement—undoubtedly there was a movement. It might have been a tramp, or a lost dog—but whatever it was, Bunter preferred the rain and the wind. He made a wild rush from the hut.

"Yaroooh!"

He stumbled over a log and went to the ground. He bumped there breathlessly, palpitating with terror.

"Oh dear! Yaroooh! Help!"

He scrambled up to run, and as he did so, a grasp fell on his fat arm—not the imaginary effect of his terrors, but a real human grasp. A voice sounded quietly in his ears.

"Shut up, you young fool! You're not going to be hurt! Shut up, and stay where you are."

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Awful for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER stayed where he was. He had no choice about that. The grasp on his fat arm was like iron.

He could see nothing of the man who had grasped him save a black shadow. But his terrified eyes picked out at last the pale glimmer of a face. He was conscious of two eyes that gleamed at him.

"Yow-wow! Help!" gurgled Bunter.

"Silence!"

The voice was still quiet, but there was a tone of menace in it. Bunter noted, however, that there was also a tone of cultivation in it, and he knew that he had not fallen into the hands of some rough and ruffianly tramp.

"Keep where you are! If you try to run again, I'll wring your neck, you young fool!"

The man released Bunter at that, but stood between him and the open front of the hut. Bunter did not think of attempting to dodge round him; he was too thoroughly scared for that. He backed to the wall, and stood huddled against it, quaking.

"Who—who are you?" he panted.

"I fancy you know," answered the quiet voice. "How did you know I was here? Does anyone else know? Answer me at once."

"I—I didn't know——"

within him as he asked himself that scaring question.

"Who are you?" rapped out the voice.

"My name's Bunter," quavered the fat junior.

"Where has your friend gone?"

"To Wharton Lodge."

"Where's that?"

"About a mile from here."

"Then he won't be back just yet. I must be gone before he comes. There's only one way of silencing your fool tongue, and I cannot take that!" the man growled.

Bunter was extremely glad to hear it.

"Have you any matches?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Strike one, and let me see you."

and examined the fat junior by its flickering light with searching eyes. Bunter blinked at him in sheer terror by the light. He saw a face that once had been handsome—that in better circumstances would have been handsome still—a well-cut face, with regular features and dark eyes—a face that once seen was not easily to be forgotten. But the gaunt wolfishness of it was what Bunter chiefly noticed. The hunted man was cold and famished, and he seemed to Bunter's scared eyes more like a wild beast than a man.

There was a grim and savage disappointment in the man's face as he eyed Bunter. No doubt he had hoped to see a person more of his own size, whose clothes he could have taken in the place



Harry Wharton stared back through the gloom as he heard a sudden bump and a yell. "What the thump——" "Yow-wow! I've fallen over a blinking root or something," groaned Billy Bunter. "I can't see in the dark, you silly idiot! Ow-wow!"

(See Chapter 2.)

"You knew I was here?"

"No!" gasped Bunter.

"Then why were you going out into the rain? I heard you tell your friend that you'd wait here till he came back with a car. Why were you going out?"

"I—I thought——" stammered Bunter. "I—I never knew there was anybody here, but—but I thought——"

"You fool! You were frightened by shadows!"

Bunter did not answer that.

It dawned upon his fat mind that, had he not yielded to his vague terrors, this terrifying unknown would never have shown himself. Bunter's attempt to leave the shed had made the hidden man believe that his presence was actually discovered.

But who was he, and why was he hiding? Bunter's heart almost died

With a trembling hand Bunter groped in his pocket for a box of matches. He struck one, and the wind blew it out instantly. But in that fraction of a moment Bunter saw enough to terrify him almost out of his fat wits. The shadowy form before him was clad in the garments of a convict, torn and muddy and wet, thick with mire, but unmistakable. The face was gaunt and almost wolfish. Bunter shuddered from head to foot. The police were still seeking for the man who had escaped from Blackmoor Prison, and Bunter, quite unintentionally, had found him. He would almost as soon have found a tiger or a rattlesnake.

"Clumsy fool!"

The convict jerked the matchbox from Bunter's hand. He struck a match, and sheltered it in the hollow of his hand,

of his own convict rags. Bunter's clothes were quite useless for that purpose. There was plenty of room for anyone in them sideways, but in length they were very much wanting. The convict was a young man, apparently about twenty-five, not less than five feet ten inches in height, and of slim, though athletic, build. He muttered a curse as he stared at Bunter.

"No use!" Bunter guessed that he was referring to the clothes, and he was glad to hear it. Certainly he did not want to change his clothes for the convict's rags. "The coat will serve somehow. Take it off."

Bunter did not dare to raise any objection. He obediently stripped off his overcoat.

"Turn out your pockets."

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Bunter obeyed.

His financial resources amounted to two shillings and sixpence. The convict grabbed it.

"Is that all?"

"That's all!" quavered Bunter.

"Bah!"

The man satisfied himself by rummaging through Bunter's pockets. He struck match after match during that process. Finally he jerked off the fat junior's cap. He jammed it on his own head, and drew the overcoat about him like a cloak, any covering being evidently welcome to the wretch, who was shivering with cold.

"I'm going now," he muttered. "You've driven me out of my shelter, you fat fool. I've a good mind—" He broke off. "Stay here! Do you hear?"

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"If you take a step after I'm gone, I'll come back to you, and knock your foolish brains out!"

"I—I won't stir!" stuttered Bunter.

"You'd better not," said the man, in a tone of deep, savage menace. "And don't say a word about me when your friend comes back for you. I'd wring both your necks as soon as look at you!"

"I—I won't say a word."

"I shan't be far away. I shall be watching you. Be careful!" snarled the convict.

"Oh dear!"

"Stay where you are, and be silent."

"Yes," quavered Bunter.

The man was gone the next moment. Bunter heard him brushing through the wet woods in the rain for a few moments, and then he was swallowed up by the darkness.

The fat junior did not stir.

He knew that the convict had fled—that he would not lose a second in placing as great a distance as possible between him and the woodcutter's hut, before the police could be informed that he had been seen there. Nevertheless,

the man's threat that he would be watching terrified the fat junior. Billy Bunter's lips were sealed till he should find himself back in the light and safety of Wharton Lodge. Shivering, without cap or coat, mumbling with terror and discomfort, Billy Bunter remained where he was, while the long minutes dragged by on leaden wings till at last he heard the hoot of a motor-horn from the direction of the road.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Blue Funk!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" boomed Bob Cherry.

"Bunter!" called Wharton.

Two shadowy figures tramped into the woodcutter's hut. Bob had come back with Wharton in the car to fetch the fat junior. Neither of them could see Bunter in the black interior of the hut, but they heard a gasping voice.

"Oh dear! I say you fellows—"

"Come on, Bunter," said Harry.

"The car's waiting in the road."

"Oh dear! Ow!"

"What's the matter?"

"Ow! Nothing."

Bunter knew that the fleeing convict must be far away by that time. But he was not taking any risks. To his scared eyes the shadows were peopled with gaunt-faced men in broad-arrow garb.

"Got an umbrella?" quavered Bunter.

"No; it's only a step to the car. You can't get much wetter!"

"Oh, really, Wharton, I think you might have brought an umbrella, when a chap hasn't a coat on."

"Eh! Have you taken your coat off, you ass? Put it on again if you have!"

"Oh, no! I mean—"

"He's got his coat off," said Bob, peering at Bunter in the gloom, "and he's taken off his cap. Did you find it too warm here, Bunter?"

"Ow! Beast!"

"Are you potty, Bunter?" demanded Wharton. "For goodness' sake, shove on your coat and cap and come along!"

"I'll come as I am!" gasped Bunter.

"Where's your coat?"

"I don't know! I mean, I gave it away! Never mind my coat—let's get out of this!"

"But—" exclaimed the amazed Wharton.

"I'm going!" snarled Bunter.

And he went. The two juniors hurried after him. It was only a short distance to the lane where the car was waiting; but Bunter was quite capable of losing himself in the wood in that short distance.

"You don't want to leave your coat behind, Bunter!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "We'll go back with you, if you like."

"Oh, shut up!"

"What?" yelled Bob.

"Mind your own business!"

"Oh, my hat!"

Bob Cherry came very near collaring William George Bunter and banging his head on a tree. But he refrained. He was really beginning to wonder whether Bunter was quite in his right senses. A fellow who tramped through pouring rain without coat or cap, and left those articles behind of his own choice, was rather hard to understand.

However, that was Bunter's own business, and Bob let it go at that. The three juniors reached the car.

"Quick!" panted Bunter.

He tore open the door of the car and plunged in head-first.

"Get off!" he shouted to the chauffeur.

"Give a chap time to get in, Bunter!" snapped Bob.

"Buck up, you silly idiot! He may be watching us this very minute!" howled the Owl of the Remove.

"He—Who—What?"

"Never mind! Get in, you dummy! What are you hanging about for?" shrieked Bunter. "Can't you move?"

Wharton and Bob Cherry got into the car. It glided away along the dark lane, with the rain beating on the roof.

"Faster!" panted Bunter.

"We're going fast enough," answered Harry.

"Tell the man to go faster, you idiot!"

"My dear ass, we can't go all out in dark, narrow lanes!" said Harry. "We don't want an accident."

"You silly chump, we may all be murdered!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"All serene, old chap!" said Bob Cherry soothingly. He had no doubt that the darkness and solitude in the wood had frightened Bunter into a state of blue funk. "You're all right now."

"He might be after us!" gasped Bunter.

"Who might?"

"Oh, nobody!"

"There was nobody in the hut, surely?" exclaimed Wharton.

"Eh! Oh, no! Not at all!"

"You haven't been frightened by some tramp?" asked the perplexed captain of the Remove.

"Ow! No! Worse than that!" groaned Bunter.

"Has anything happened while I've been gone?"

"Oh, no, nothing!"

"Something's frightened him!" said Bob. "He's as white as chalk. Some tramp's taken his coat, perhaps. I don't see why he can't say so. Can't you understand that you're safe now, Bunter—we're with you?"

"Fat lot of use you'd be against a convict!" groaned Bunter.

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NOW ON SALE.

"A convict!" exclaimed the two juniors together, in amazement.

"Oh, no; nothing of the kind!"

Bunter was peering with terrified eyes out of the windows of the car, as it glided along the dark road. It was easy for the two juniors to see that he had had a fright; though it was not so easy to determine whether there had been any real cause for it. Fright came rather easily to William George Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove.

"I suppose he got scared in the dark," said Harry, after a pause.

"That's it," said Bob. "Only what's become of his coat and cap? Even Bunter isn't idiot enough to take them off for nothing."

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"According to the papers, there was a convict got away from Blackmoor the other day," said Bob. "I suppose Bunter hasn't dropped on him."

"Not likely," said Harry.

"That's all you know!" gasped Bunter.

"Well, have you?" demanded Bob.

"Oh, no; nothing of the sort! I'm not going to say anything till we're indoors. He said he would be watching!"

"Who did?" yelled Bob Cherry.

"Oh, nobody!"

"My only hat!"

"Tell the man to go faster!" gasped Bunter. "He might be after us! He might shoot the lot of us and take the car—"

"Who might?"

"Nobody!" stuttered Bunter.

"Nobody at all!"

"Oh crumbs!"

The car was eating up the distance. Already the gates of Wharton Lodge were in sight. Bunter gasped with relief as he recognised the drive. He gasped again as the lighted facade of the house burst upon his view.

"Oh dear! Thank goodness we're safe at last!"

"Safe as houses, old bean!" said Bob cheerily. "No shadows to be scared of now."

"It wasn't a shadow, you beast! Do you think a shadow could have taken my coat and cap and my money?" hooted Bunter.

"Nunno! Did anybody?"

"Oh, no! Certainly not!" gasped Bunter.

He rolled out of the car. Wadham had opened the door already, and the light streamed out from the hall. Billy Bunter bolted in like a fat rabbit into its burrow, almost bumping over the plump butler as he did so. Wadham looked at him. Wadham did not approve of William George Bunter at the best of times. He approved of him now less than ever.

Wharton and Bob Cherry followed Bunter in. Colonel Wharton came into the hall.

"You had better change at once, Bunter!" he said, rather curtly. "You are drenched!"

"Ow, yes! Soaked!" gasped Bunter. "I say, telephone to the police station. They may be able to get my coat back."

"What?"

"And my money! The beast took all my money!"

Colonel Wharton stared at him.

"What do you mean, Bunter?"

"The convict!" yelled Bunter.

"The convict! What convict? Are you wandering in your mind?" asked the old gentleman testily.

"He robbed me!" hooted Bunter. "Took my coat and my cap and all my money! He'd have taken all my clothes if they'd fitted him. I could see it in his eye. An awful-looking villain in convict clothes! Oh dear!"

"Has anything happened to Bunter, Harry?"

"I think something must have, uncle," answered Wharton. "We found him in the woodcutter's hut without his coat or cap, and frightened out of his wits."

"I wasn't frightened!" snorted Bunter. He was not frightened now, at all events. "I'd have knocked him spinning, only—I was taken by surprise. Besides, I was afraid he might go for you fellows; I wasn't thinking of myself. This is all the thanks I get, of course!"

"Stop talking nonsense, Bunter!" said Colonel Wharton.

"Eh?"

"Stop talking nonsense, and tell me what has happened—if anything has happened!"

Bunter, in great indignation, spluttered out his tale of what had happened. Colonel Wharton regarded him dubiously. But for the loss of the overcoat he would have been strongly disposed to believe that the fat junior had been frightened in the dark, and had imagined the rest. Having heard Bunter's tale to the end, he questioned him, and picked out the facts from a tangle of ramblings and exaggerations.

"I shall telephone to Inspector Hotham at Woodford, Bunter," said the colonel, at last. "Now go and change your clothes."

And Bunter went.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Nothing for Bunter!

WILLIAM GEORGE BUNTER came down to a late tea at Wharton Lodge, quite a new Bunter. Within the walls of the Lodge, even Bunter was not afraid of the escaped convict; and he had had time to realise the importance of his adventure. For three days Convict No. 19 had been at large, baffling all the efforts of the police to recapture him: his track had been completely lost. Bunter—inadvertently, certainly—had found it. There was snow on the Surrey Hills, and for days the weather had been wild, with few fine intervals; and that had given the hunted man a chance to elude his pursuers—though it must also have entailed much suffering upon him.

In prison garb, ragged and tattered and torn, hungry and worn down by exposure, the convict's experiences in the wild, wintry weather, amid snow and sleet and rain, must have been terrible. The search was difficult enough, and hitherto it had been totally unsuccessful. In all parts of the county the police were eager for news of the escaped man; and it was William George Bunter who had news of him. The Owl of the Remove swelled with satisfaction and importance at that thought.

When he came down, the colonel told him that Inspector Hotham was coming over from Woodford in a car to hear his story; and that gave the final touch to Bunter's swelling importance. The police-inspector was making a special journey that wild night, specially to see William George Bunter and hear what he had to tell. No other fellow at Wharton Lodge was so important as William George; there was no doubt that upon this occasion, at least, he was the "goods."

Miss Amy Wharton, the colonel's sister, gave him a look of concerned interest when he sat down to tea with the Famous Five.

"Were you very much frightened?" she asked.

Bunter blinked at her through his big spectacles.

"Frightened?" he repeated, as if the word were quite strange to his vocabulary. "Good lord, no!"

"Not the least little bit?" grinned Frank Nugent.

"No fear!"

"Gammon!" remarked Johnny Bull.

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"Appearances are deceptive," observed Bob Cherry. "Bunter looked frightened when we found him in the hut; but he was really as brave as a lion. Judging simply by appearances, a fellow would have thought that he was scared out of his wits."

Miss Wharton smiled.

"A little cake, Bunter," she said hastily.

"Thank you," said Bunter, with a glare at Bob. "Perhaps you'd have been frightened Bob Cherry, if a man suddenly clapped a revolver to your head in the dark."

"A revolver?" yelled the Famous Five.

"Six-chambered revolver, with his finger on the trigger," said Bunter impressively. "I can feel the muzzle against my chest now."

"Wonderful!" ejaculated Nugent.

"Eh! What's wonderful, you ass?"

"To feel the muzzle on your chest when the revolver was clapped to your head."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I mean, he clapped the other revolver to my chest!" stammered Bunter. "He had two—one in each hand."

"The authorities ought to look into this," said Bob gravely. "They must supply the convicts at Blackmoor with a regular arsenal of firearms. It doesn't seem safe, to me."

"Perhaps you don't believe me?" snorted Bunter.

"The perhapsfulness is terrific," chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Well, I know what I went through," said Bunter sulkily. "I can tell you it's no joke to have a revolver clapped to your head and another to your chest, with a ruffianly convict going through your pockets for your money."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob. "He must have gone through your pockets with his feet if he had both hands full of revolvers!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I—I mean—"

"Yes, let's know what you mean, Bunter," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Do you mean that you dreamed the revolvers?"

"No, I don't!" roared Bunter. "But for the revolvers I should have knocked him spinning. In fact, I did knock him down."

"Oh, my hat! You did?"

"I did!" said Bunter firmly.

Billy Bunter's tales, like the little peach in the orchard, grew and grew and grew. Whenever a telling detail occurred to him, he never could resist the temptation to weave it into his narrative. His invention on such occasions was almost visible to the eye: his hearers could, as it were, see the wheels go round.

"I knocked him flying," said Bunter. "He went heels over head, and landed on the ground with a sickening thud."

"Hear, hear!"

"Seizing him by the throat, I shook him like—like a terrier shakes a rat," said Bunter. "I said 'Surrender, villain!'"

"Oh dear!"

"He struggled like—like anything, but I gripped him in a grasp of iron."

and pinned him to the ground. Then I—"

"Then you woke up?" asked Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Bunter. "Then he drew the revolver—I mean the revolvers, and what could a fellow do? He pointed them at me, and said 'Hands up!'"

"Phew!"

"But for that I should have captured him, of course," said Bunter. "As it was, he got away."

"Now we're getting down to the facts," remarked Bob Cherry. "He got away—that's a cert."

"As for being frightened," continued Bunter, "I never turned a hair. Some fellows would have been frightened. In fact, you fellows would have been scared stiff. Not me. Still, it's no joke to have the muzzle of a revolver squeezing into your ribs, I can tell you."

"Which hand did he hold that revolver with?" asked Bob. "He had a revolver at your head and one at your chest; and now it seems that he poked one in your ribs. Did he hold that one in his teeth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They ought to be more careful at Blackmoor," said Nugent. "It's simply scandalous to arm a convict to the teeth when he's going to escape."

"You can cackle!" hooted Bunter.

"Thanks—we will! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yah!"

William George Bunter devoted himself to the cake. He was still going strong when Wadham brought in word that Inspector Hotham had arrived, and was waiting for him in the library with Colonel Wharton. Billy Bunter rose from the tea-table and bestowed a disdainful blink on the grinning chums of the Remove.

"The police-inspector thinks it worth while to come over and see me about it, anyway," he sneered.

"Leave out the revolvers when you tell Mr. Hotham about it," advised Bob Cherry. "Keep as near to the facts as you can. It won't be very near, anyhow."

"Yah!"

Bunter rolled away to see the inspector from Woodford. As a matter of fact, Bunter acted on Bob's advice and left out most of the dramatic details when he told his story to the police-inspector. Under the official's calm and penetrating eye, Bunter felt that the grip of iron, the threatening revolvers, and the "Hands up!" had better be omitted. Mr. Hotham soon elucidated all that the Owl of the Remove could tell him; and though it was not the thrilling tale that Bunter would have liked to make it, the inspector seemed very satisfied.

"There is no doubt that the young gentleman has seen George Waring, who was Convict No. 19 at Blackmoor Prison," he said to Colonel Wharton. "This information will be extremely valuable to us. It was not known that Waring was in this neighbourhood at all; in fact, it was supposed that he had succeeded in escaping to London, where he has relations. He was a tutor before he went to Blackmoor, and some of his connections are very respectable people in a good position."

"Then they would surely not help a rascal fleeing from the police?" exclaimed the colonel.

"One can never tell—blood is thicker than water, as the saying is. They might," answered the inspector. "But from the information Master Bunter has given us, I think we may be able to lay this rogue by the heels before he can

escape to London. We shall lose no time, at all events. I am very much obliged to you, Master Bunter, and I hope you did not have a very severe fright."

"Oh, not at all, sir!" answered Bunter airily. "I'm not easily frightened. Any fellow at Greyfriars will tell you that I'm as brave as a lion."

Inspector Hotham gave him a rather curious glance, but made no comment. Bunter rolled away to continue his attack on the cake. After tea he joined the Famous Five.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Still feeling the muzzles of all those revolvers?" asked Bob Cherry. "Must be horrid to have a man shoving three revolvers at a fellow all at once. Or was it four?"

"Four by this time, surely," said Nugent. "It will be half a dozen by to-morrow."

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said Bunter peevishly. "Look here, is there any reward for that convict?"

"Oh, my hat! On the make, as usual?"

"Well, I think I'm entitled to the reward, if they get him," said Bunter. "I can't afford to do the work of the police for nothing."

"There's a reward of fifty pounds for information leading to his capture," said Johnny Bull. "I saw it posted up outside the police station at Woodford."

Bunter's fat face beamed.

"Oh, good! I can do with fifty pounds! Of course, it's not so much to me as it would be to you fellows! Still, it will come in useful."

"But they haven't captured him yet, and you don't get it unless they do!" grinned Bob Cherry.

Bunter snorted.

"They're bound to catch him now I've helped them. If they don't, they ought to be jolly well sacked. I expect we shall hear in the morning that they've got him."

But William George Bunter was disappointed.

In the morning there was no news of the convict's capture, and there was still no news when the time came for Bunter to take his train.

Neither was there any news of him before the vacation came to its end, and the Remove fellows returned to Greyfriars School.

George Waring, otherwise Convict No. 19 of Blackmoor, seemed to have vanished from the face of the earth that wild, rainy night; since Billy Bunter had seen him by the light of matches in the woodcutters' hut, no one had seen him.

And by the time he joined up at Greyfriars for the new term, Billy Bunter's hope of bagging the fifty pounds reward had sunk to zero.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Back to Greyfriars!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Cheerio!"

Five juniors met on the platform at Courtfield Junction. They met amid a crowd of other Greyfriars fellows, swarming out of the train that had stopped at Courtfield.

It was the first day of the new term; cold and windy, with a light fall of snow. But the faces of the Famous Five were bright and cheery. They had enjoyed their Christmas holidays; but they were not sorry to be going back to the school. The five had come from various directions, those who arrived earlier waiting for the others at Courtfield Junction to take the local train to Friar-dale together. Frank Nugent was the last of the five to turn out at Courtfield,

and with him was his minor, Dicky Nugent of the Second Form.

Dicky Nugent was not looking his usual cheery self. In fact, he seemed rather sulky. But that was not uncommon with Dicky after a holiday. He was the darling of his mother and sisters at home, and a week or two at Greyfriars was needed for the effect of his spoiling during the holidays to wear off.

"Here we are again!" said Bob Cherry cheerily. "Hallo, hallo, hallo, Dicky! Enjoying life, what?"

Dicky Nugent grunted.

"It's rotten!" he remarked, apparently referring to the universe in general.

"What's the trouble, kid?" asked Harry Wharton.

"Not so much of your kid!" answered Nugent minor.

Harry Wharton smiled. On account of his chum, he bore patiently with Nugent's young brother.

"My mistake!" he said. "I mean, what's the trouble, elderly gent?"

"Oh, don't be an ass!" said the fag. "I call it rotten, shoving a fellow back to school when he isn't well."

"Aren't you well?" asked Wharton in surprise. Dicky Nugent looked sulky, but he certainly looked the picture of rosy health.

"Only gammon!" said Frank Nugent.

"Dicky worked up a cold and a cough to get an extra week at home, and it was all right with the mater, but the pater wasn't taking any."

"Hinc illae lacrymae!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"I had a cough," declared Dicky. "I was coughing this morning, Frank, and you jolly well know it."

"That was for the pater to hear, to wring his hard heart," chuckled Nugent. "You never coughed after we got into the train."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's all very well," grunted Nugent minor. "I stayed in bed specially with that cold yesterday, and as it turns out it was a waste."

"Too bad!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You young spoofer!" grunted Johnny Bull.

"Oh, rats!" said Nugent minor. "We're getting a new Form master this term in the Second, and he won't be like old Twigg. I know that. I can get on with old Twigg; he never makes a chap work, and if he gives a man lines he hardly ever asks to see them. The new blighter won't be like that—stands to reason. I call it rotten!"

"You'd better not let your new Form master hear you calling him a blighter, at any rate," remarked Wharton.

"I don't care! He may be some old hunk with a jaw like a vice, like your Form master, old Quelch," said Dicky dismally. "If he is, we jolly well shan't stand him in the Second, I can tell you."

The chums of the Remove grinned. Richard Nugent of the Second Form spoke with lofty independence; but how he was to avoid "standing" his new Form master, even if that gentleman turned out like Mr. Quelch of the Remove, was not clear.

"Is old Twigg ill again?" asked Johnny Bull.

Snort from Dicky.

"Isn't he always ill?" he snapped. "I believe he goes out and gets ill on purpose, just to annoy us. It's 'flu this time, I believe, and he mayn't turn up for weeks. I wonder the Head doesn't sack him. It must be a frightful trouble to him getting other men to take Twigg's place when he's seedy. Too jolly easy-going, in my opinion."

"You should tell the Head your opinion, suggested Bob. "It may not have occurred to him to consult the Second Form about these things."



Horace Coker gave a roar as his silk hat was knocked from his head and sent flying across the platform. It dropped in front of Temple, who promptly passed it to Dabney. "You cheeky fags!" roared Coker. (See Chapter 6.)

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, can it!" grunted Dicky. "I can tell you I'm fed-up. Anyhow, I shan't stand any rot from this man Gilmore. Blow him!"

"You're a young ass, Dicky," said Frank Nugent. "I've heard of this man Gilmore, and he's a great man at games. No end of a footballer."

"That's rather a change after old Twigg," said Bob.

"I'd rather have old Twigg," said Dicky. "I don't see what he wanted to get knocked out for again. Inconsiderate, I call it. But if the new man thinks he's going to make us work he's jolly well mistaken!" added Dicky firmly.

"Look here, Dicky—" said Frank.

"Rats!"

"You cheeky young ass—"

"Oh, can it, Frank!" said Nugent minor derisively. "I've had enough jaw from the pater; give us a rest! Hallo, there's young Gatty!"

And, leaving his elder brother without ceremony, Nugent minor butted his way through the crowd on the platform to greet Gatty of the Second.

"Cheerful young sprig," remarked Bob Cherry. "Let's hope his new Form-master will lather him. It will do him good."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter! Fatter than ever!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Still feeling those revolvers?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast! I say, you fellows, they never got that man," said Bunter. "I never got the reward. Bit thick, isn't it? Lot of use a fellow running these fearful risks to help the police capture escaped convicts when they let him slip

through their fingers, after all. Sicken- ing. I call it." Bunter blinked seriously at the Famous Five. "Owing to that, you know, I've come back to Greyfriars short of money. I've been disappointed about a postal-order, too."

"For the first time in your life?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you fellows have got half-a-crown you don't want I can do with it till my postal-order comes. Don't all speak at once."

The Famous Five did not all speak at once. They did not speak at all. They only grinned. Apparently they had no half-crowns that they did not want.

Bunter blinked at them peevishly.

"Seen my minor?" he asked. "He's got some toffee. He dodged me when we got out of the train. I don't know why."

"The toffee was the whyfulness, perhaps," suggested Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Perhaps that's why he cleared out of the station," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Go after him, old fat man. Sammy was busy on the toffee when he went; but you may be in at the death, if you hurry."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter rolled hastily away to the exit from the platform. If Sammy Bunter of the Second Form had toffee in his possession, he was unlikely to be anxious to see his brother William George; but by the same token, William George was very anxious to see Sammy.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There's Coker of the Fifth!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "Isn't it lucky that it's snowed?"

"The luckfulness is terrific."

Beside the platform was an open bank, where flowers grew in the summer, but which was now thick with snow. Five pairs of hands scooped up snow at once to knead into snowballs.

Coker of the Fifth towered over the crowd on the platform; his shining silk-hat was seen from afar, like the plume of Navarre of olden time. That shining topper was the target for five well-aimed snowballs, that all flew at once, and all landed on the target.

Crash!

Horace Coker gave a roar as his silk-hat was lifted suddenly from his head and flew away over other heads. It dropped in front of Temple of the Fourth, who took the pass with equal promptness, and kicked it to Dabney. A crowd of the Fourth chased that hapless topper along the platform, while Coker stared round in bewilderment.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky fags!" roared Coker, understanding what had happened. "Why, I'll smash you!"

Coker made a rush for the Famous Five, who scattered, laughing. Chasing the elusive juniors on a crowded platform was not an easy task. Horace Coker bumped into Wingate and Gwynne of the Sixth Form, who were walking with great state and detachment amid the throng of lesser mortals. The great men of the Sixth would not, in other circumstances, have taken any heed of the existence of Coker of the Fifth; but in these circumstances they had to take heed, as Coker bumped into them and sent them nearly sprawling.

"Here, look out!" roared Gwynne.

"You clumsy ass!" hooted Wingate.

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"Oh, get out of the way!" gasped Coker.

Instead of getting out of the way, the captain of Greyfriars and his fellow-prefect collared Horace Coker and laid him on the platform with a mighty concussion. Then they walked on, with the dignity befitting Sixth Form men and prefects. They left Coker of the Fifth sprawling on the platform, struggling frantically to get his second wind, what time Harry Wharton & Co. discussed buns and hot coffee in the station buffet, with smiling faces.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

A Shock for Bunter!

BILLY BUNTER blinked round morosely outside Courtfield Station.

Sammy Bunter was not to be seen.

Bunter could not help feeling indignant.

When an affectionate elder brother looked for his minor, on the way to school on the first day of term, naturally he did not expect to be dodged by a thankless young rascal.

But there was no doubt that Sammy was dodging him.

Bunter could not help feeling that he was unlikely to find Sammy, if Sammy could help it, until the toffee had been disposed of.

The Owl of the Remove blinked into the bun-shop near the station. If Sammy had not walked on to Greyfriars, that was a likely place to find him.

There were a good many Greyfriars fellows in the bun-shop, as well as many other customers, but among them the fat face and ample figure of Samuel Bunter were not to be seen.

Bunter lingered in the doorway.

He reflected bitterly that, had the police shown a little more activity in the pursuit of Convict Nineteen of Blackmoor, he would have been in ample funds to partake of the excellent things that were exposed to his view in the bun-shop.

As matters stood, Bunter could not be a partaker, owing to a stringency in the financial line. He stood in the doorway with longing eyes, like a podgy Peri at the gate of Paradise. He blinked at the Greyfriars fellows dotted about the shop, one after another, considering whether there was a likely victim whom he could "touch" for a little spread. But they were mostly seniors, and even Bunter had not the nerve to join a Fifth or Sixth Form man at his table.

Suddenly he gave a start.

His eyes, and his spectacles, became glued upon a man sitting at a little table in a secluded corner, finishing a cup of coffee.

Bunter fairly gasped.

The man's face, handsome, clear-cut, with dark eyes, was as well known to him as his own fat visage in the glass.

True, the last time he had seen that face it had been gaunt and haggard, lined with want. But Bunter knew it at once.

"Oh, crikey!" murmured Bunter.

It was Convict Nineteen of Blackmoor. At all events, Bunter was absolutely sure that it was.

It was a staggering discovery.

The man was well dressed now; he wore a well-cut overcoat, and the rest of his clothes, so far as Bunter could see, were well-cut and good. But the face was unmistakable. The gaunt, haggard look had vanished, the handsome face was calm and sedate; the

young man appeared perfectly at his ease. So absolutely normal was his manner that Bunter wondered whether he was making a mistake, and whether he was deceived by some chance resemblance. But as he blinked, with a fascinated gaze, at the handsome face, he felt that a mistake was impossible. It was George Waring, Convict Nineteen, or his ghost.

So fixed was Bunter's amazed stare that the man became conscious of it, and glanced at the fat junior.

Bunter trembled under his glance.

He expected Convict Nineteen to recognise him instantly; the man had seen him as clearly as he had seen the man, in the light of the matches in the woodcutters' hut in the Surrey wood.

But there was no sign of recognition in the young man's face—only a slightly annoyed surprise, such as anyone might have shown at finding himself stared at fixedly by a stranger.

Apparently Convict Nineteen had forgotten Bunter.

But Bunter had not forgotten him. This was the man, he was convinced, who was worth fifty pounds to the fellow who could give the police information leading to his arrest.

The man rose from the table, paid his bill, and walked to the door. Billy Bunter dodged out into the street.

His fat brain was in a whirl.

The man passed him on the pavement without a glance, either having forgotten him already, or not noticing him there.

He walked towards the station.

The Owl of the Remove rolled after him. What to do in these extraordinary circumstances Billy Bunter did not know, but he was determined not to lose sight of the convict.

The man stopped and lifted his hand as a sign to one of the taxicabs in the rank outside Courtfield Station.

The taxi drew up at the kerb.

Billy Bunter gasped.

The man was taking a taxi—he was going to escape! William George Bunter's fat mind did not work rapidly; he simply did not know what to do. Seizing the escaping convict with his own fat hands was not an idea that recommended itself to him. He blinked wildly round. There was no constable in sight. The young man stepped into the taxi, and it glided away down the High Street slowly on account of the snow and the traffic. Under Bunter's very eyes and spectacles the man was escaping!

Loder of the Sixth came out of the station with Walker and Carne. Just in the nick of time Bunter thought, and he rolled up to them excitedly.

"I say, Loder—" he gasped.

Loder stared at him.

"Cut, you cheeky fag!" he snapped, naturally wrathful at being addressed by a mere junior in Courtfield High Street.

"I say, there's a convict—"

"What?"

"Convict 19!" gasped Bunter. "He's escaping—he's in that taxi! Look!"

Loder of the Sixth did not look at the taxi; he looked at Billy Bunter—and it was quite a deadly look.

To Loder's mind Bunter's words could only mean one thing—that this cheeky fag was daring to attempt to pull the leg of a Sixth Form prefect of Greyfriars. Loder of the Sixth was about the last man at Greyfriars to be japed with impunity by a cheeky junior.

"You impudent little fat scoundrel!" said Loder in measured tones. "I'll give you escaping convicts!"

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the Sixth-Former took him by the collar.

Crash!

Bunter was spun round in a favourable

position for kicking, and Loder's heavy boot landed on him.

Bunter sprawled on the slushy pavement with a bump and a roar.

Loder and his companions walked on, laughing, and disappeared into the bunshop.

"Ow, wow! Oh dear!" gasped Bunter. He sat up, gasping.

"He, he, he!"

That squeaky cachinnation was familiar to Bunter's ears. He blinked round and saw Sammy.

Sammy grinned down at him.

"He, he, he! You got it, Billy! What did you cheek Loder for? He, he, he!"

Bunter staggered to his feet. There were several sticky smears on Sammy's fat face round his capacious mouth, which showed the way the toffee had gone—and that it was gone for good. But Bunter was not thinking of the toffee now; he was thinking of his amazing discovery of a convict, hunted by the police, strolling coolly in Courtfield High Street and taking a taxicab there.

"Did you see that taxi, Sammy?" he gasped.

"Eh? Which? I've seen a dozen!" answered Sammy.

"You young idiot!"

Bunter blinked after the taxicab. It had disappeared now among the traffic and was hopelessly lost. Owing to Loder's unfortunate reception of the thrilling information Bunter had given him the Owl of the Remove had lost track of the escaping convict.

He grunted and tramped into the station, leaving his affectionate minor grinning, evidently much enlivened by the scene he had witnessed.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Gammon!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

The local train was coming in, and the Famous Five had lined up for it, when Billy Bunter rolled up to them with breathless excitement. He clutched hold of Harry Wharton's arm.

"Leggo, fathead!" said Harry. "The train's coming in!"

"Never mind the train now!" gasped Bunter.

"Ass! We've got to get to Greyfriars!"

"The convict—"

"What?"

"That convict!" spluttered Bunter.

"Eh? Where?" ejaculated Wharton.

"Who? Which? What?"

"That man I saw near Wharton Lodge!" gasped Bunter. "I've seen him again! He's in Courtfield!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"What had I better do, old chap?" panted Bunter.

"Better stop dreaming in the broad daylight, and leave it till you get to the dorm to-night," suggested Johnny Bull.

"You silly chump!" hooted Bunter. "I tell you I saw him—the convict—Waring—Convict 19—the very man—"

"What utter rot!"

"I tell you—" roared Bunter.

"The fat ass is trying to pull our leg," said Frank Nugent. "Chuck it, Bunter! It won't wash!"

"The won't-washfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter!" grinned Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I tell you I saw him. He was in the bunshop, having coffee, when I looked in for Sammy—"

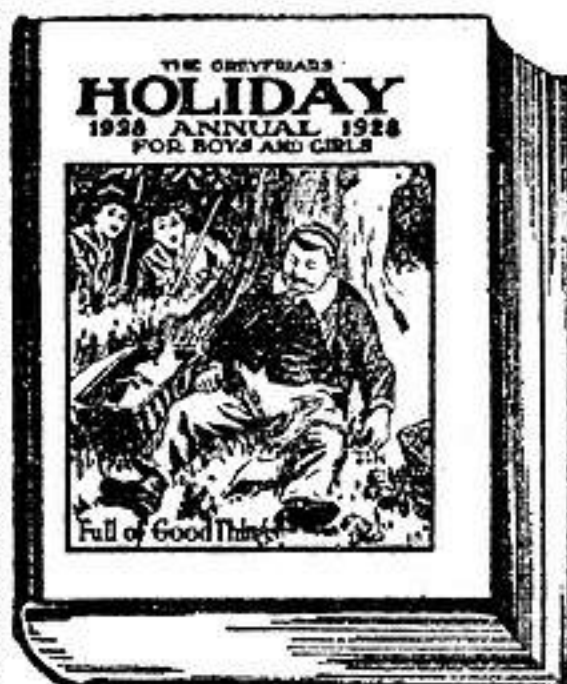
"Any revolvers about him?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I tell you—" shrieked Bunter.
"Pile it on!"
"He jumped into a taxicab!" hooted Bunter. "Scooted off, you know! I told Loder, and the beast kicked me!"
"Jolly good idea of Loder's! Let's do the same, you men!" suggested Johnny Bull.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Look here, Wharton, never mind that train; come with me to the police station, and set them after that villain, and—"
"I can see myself doing it!" said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "I should expect them to give me what Loder gave you!"
"But it's true! I saw him—I saw him with my own eyes!" shrieked Bunter.
"Saw him with a saw next time, and then he won't be able to get away!" suggested Bob Cherry.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"You silly ass! I saw him—" "Hullo, hullo, hullo! Here's the train!"
"I say, you fellows—" "Scat!"
The local train stopped, and Harry Wharton & Co. entered a carriage. Billy Bunter's startling story had made no impression whatever upon the Famous Five. It was barely possible that Bunter fancied that he had seen the escaped convict, but that was the most that the chums of the Remove were willing to believe. That a desperate, hunted man had been taking coffee in the Courtfield bunshop and taking a taxi in the High Street was rather too much for them to credit.
Bunter blinked into the carriage after them. The indifference of the Famous Five was exasperating to the fat junior.
"I say, you fellows—" "Cheese it, Bunter!"
"You're letting a dangerous character escape!" gasped Bunter.
"Well, we're not bobbies!" said Nugent. "Get after him yourself, Bunter. Seize him with that grasp of iron you told us about!"
"Ha, ha, ha!"
"I shall lose the reward!" howled Bunter.
"Ha, ha, ha!"
Bunter, as usual, was thinking of the loaves and fishes. The Famous Five roared with laughter. They fancied that Bunter was prepared to recognise almost anybody as the escaped convict when there was a matter of fifty pounds depending on the recognition. Really hardly anybody was safe from being identified by Billy Bunter as an escaped convict so long as the reward was offered.
"Getting in, fathead?" asked Bob. "Train's just going!"
"You fellows come with me and hunt for him—" "I don't think!"
"You're not doing your duty," said Bunter hotly. "It's every fellow's duty to help me get hold of that reward—I mean to get hold of that villain—" "Ha, ha, ha!"
Doors were slamming along the train, and Billy Bunter hopped into the carriage. Apparently the fat junior did not want to enter upon a convict-hunt upon his lonely own. The train moved out of the station, and Billy Bunter glared at the Famous Five in deep indignation.
"The villain will get away now," he said. "It's all your fault! Do you think I had better tell Mr. Quelch when we get to Greyfriars, Wharton?"
"You'd better not tell Quelch fairy-tales, unless you want to begin the term with a licking."

"Beast! I saw him—" "Give us a rest!"
"He had changed his clothes," said Bunter. "He seemed to have money—very likely the money he took from me—" "Would it last him all this time?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Did he take all your hundred-pound notes?"
"Beast!"
Bunter relapsed into sulky silence. The Famous Five refused absolutely to be thrilled, or even interested at all. They did not even discuss the escaped convict as the train ran on to Friar-dale; they discussed matters that were quite trifling in comparison, such as forthcoming football fixtures at Greyfriars.
"Talk about Pontius Pilate fiddling while Carthage was burning!" said Bunter bitterly.
At which the Famous Five roared again.
"Wasn't it Nero?" grinned Bob.

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"And wasn't it Rome?" chuckled Nugent.
"No, it wasn't! You fellows don't know much about history. But look here, about that convict—" "Cheese it!" roared the Famous Five all together.
"I say, you fellows—" "Shut up!"
And at long last, William George Bunter did shut up. He was frowning morosely when the train ran into Friar-dale. The Famous Five walked to the school with a crowd of other fellows, at a pace which relieved them of the further society of William George Bunter. For which relief they were thankful.

THE NINTH CHAPTER. First Day of Term!

FIRST day of term at Greyfriars, as at all schools, was a busy day. Everybody had plenty to do, and plenty to say. Medical certificates had to be handed in, night bags unpacked, studies taken possession of, and arranged and re-arranged, new

fellows surveyed and commented on—disparagingly, as a rule—and there was supper in Big Hall, and a speech from the Head—the same speech to which generations of Greyfriars fellows had listened, and which some of them knew almost by heart.

Form masters whisked about incessantly, with hardly time to snatch a hurried meal in Common-room; and even the best-tempered masters had rather an edge to their temper. The deep, ponderous voice of Mr. Prout, master of the Fifth, dominated Masters' room, as usual, from the start; other masters had to hear all about Mr. Prout's exploits at winter sports in Switzerland; Mr. Prout being meanwhile utterly regardless of how other masters had passed the vacation. Even the Head's stately seclusion, in which he generally reposed like an ancient god on high Olympus, was constantly invaded; even Dr. Locke, on the first day of term, betrayed a slight acerbity.

Fellows crowded the notice-boards to ascertain what changes, if any, there were in the time-tables; whether there were any new prefects, and if so, who and which; fags were selected by the great men of the Sixth; ragging and larking went on in the passages almost with impunity; there were no classes and no prep; all the fellows had a lot to say, and generally they said it all at once. Even Billy Bunter forgot all about his escaped convict, in the pressure of other affairs.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, called over his Form, and told them that he expected better results this term than last; as he always did. If the Remove master really nourished these expectations, his scholastic life must have been a series of disappointments.

After supper in Hall, Wharton and Nugent went to their study, No. 1, in the Remove, to arrange certain articles which they had brought from home for the adornment of that celebrated apartment.

They were busy in the study when Dicky Nugent came in.

Nugent minor was looking very gloomy.

"He's a beast!" he remarked.

"Eh! Who?" asked Frank.

"Gilmore."

"Who's Gilmore?" asked Wharton.

Snort, from Nugent minor. The most important happening at Greyfriars was the appointment of a new master of the Second Form, in the place of Mr. Twigg, who was away on account of ill-health. At all events, that seemed to the Second Form the most important happening.

"It's Dick's new Form master," said Frank.

"Oh! I remember! Got the tacks?" asked Harry. Pictures in the Remove studies were hung by means of tacks.

"Here they are! What's the matter with Gilmore, Dicky?"

"He's a rotter!"

"Not licked already, kid?"

Dicky Nugent sniffed.

"If he had the neck to lick a man on the first day of term, I'd jolly well hack his shins!" he retorted.

Nugent smiled.

"Well, what's he done, then?" he asked.

"He's a beast!" groaned Dicky. "He's had us all up in the Form-room—on the first day of term, you know—and gone for us. We were playing leapfrog when he came in, and he had the cheek to say that it mustn't occur again in the Form-room!"

"Some masters don't like leapfrog in their Form-rooms!" observed Wharton gravely.

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"Ain't it the first day of term?" hooted Dicky. Evidently, from Nugent minor's point of view, first day of term, like charity, covered a multitude of sins.

"Well, is that all?" asked Nugent.

"He's a vile beast!" said Dicky. "He's going to make us work. I could see it in his eye. Not like old Twigg at all. The kind of man who hands out lines, and asks to see 'em afterwards."

"Awful!" said Harry.

"Oh, don't be a funny ass! I've got an impot that I used all last term for 'Twigg!' groaned Dicky. "I trotted the same paper out every time, and it was good enough for Twigg. I don't believe it will pass even once with this beast Gilmore."

"Better not get any lines, then," suggested Wharton.

"Oh, don't be an ass!" Nugent minor obviously regarded that suggestion as irritatingly frivolous. "He's put us through a sort of examination—first day of term, you know. Says he's surprised."

"Surprised at the amount of your knowledge?" asked Wharton, with a grin.

"Nunno! The other way about. He says we've all got to work together this term, and pull up—him and us, you know. He can work if he likes. He seems to think that men come to Greyfriars to work!" said Nugent minor indignantly. "I'll show him, the beast! I wish old Twigg would get well and come back. I could get on with Twigg."

"Better make the best of Gilmore, as you'll have to stand him for half a term at least," suggested Frank.

"Oh, rot! Gatty and Myers and me have made up our minds that we're not going to stand it," said Dicky. "The beast looked at our books, and jawed several fellows because the covers were off. Old Twigg never noticed such things. I've got to get a new Latin Principia. I sold mine last term, and used Gatty's. He says I'm to get a new one at once. Nice, ain't it?"

"Fearful!" said Wharton.

"If he goes on like this, there will be trouble!" said Nugent minor darkly. "I don't see getting a new book."

"You young ass!" said Frank. "Of course you must get a new book."

"Books cost money."

"I dare say you can get hold of one from Fishy cheap. He's always got a lot of fellows' books on hand that he buys for next to nothing when they're hard up," said Wharton.

"It was Fishy bought mine last term; he gave me twopence for it," said Nugent minor. "But you know Fishy—he will want a bob for it."

"Give him the bob, then."

Frank Nugent laughed. He understood now why his minor had come to Study No. 1 with his tale of woe.

"See if Fishy's got the book, Dicky, and tell him I'll square for it," he said. Nugent minor brightened.

"Right-ho! Mind, I'm not going to stand Gilmore's swank, all the same. If he keeps on like this, there will be trouble in the Second, I can jolly well tell him."

"I say, you fellows."

Billy Bunter rolled into the study. His little, round eyes were wide open with excitement behind his spectacles. He gasped as he rolled into No. 1.

"I've seen him!" he panted.

"You've seen Gilmore?" asked Dicky. The new master of the Second was uppermost in the fag's mind.

"Eh! Who's Gilmore?"

"My new Form-master!"

"Blow you and your new Form-master!"

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master. Never knew you had a new Form-master. What the thump does your new Form-master matter to anybody?"

"Why, you cheeky fat idiot——"

"Oh, shut up! I say, you fellows, I've seen him!"

"Who's him?" asked Nugent. "Is it a him ancient or modern?"

"The convict."

"What?"

"The convict!" gasped Bunter, in great excitement. "He's here—at Greyfriars! What do you think of that?"

Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent stared at Bunter. Dicky Nugent blinked at him. Apparently Bunter expected to thrill Study No. 1 with that startling news. Study No. 1 was not thrilled in the very least.

"You burbling ass!" exclaimed Wharton. "What idiotic bee have you got in your bonnet now?"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Are you trying to pull our leg again with your silly convict, you frabjous fathead?"

"I've seen him!" yelled Bunter. "I say, you fellows, you could have knocked me down with a feather. I'd forgotten all about him, you know—and then, all of a sudden, I came on him."

"You came on the escaped convict?" yelled Nugent.

"Yes!" gasped Bunter.

"Here—at Greyfriars?"

"Yes."

"You burbling ass——"

"He's here! It was in Masters' passage," gasped Bunter. "I was coming along, you know, and I nearly ran into him. When I saw that it was the convict I jumped, like—like anything."

"You saw an escaped convict walking down Masters' passage at Greyfriars," howled Wharton.

"Yes," gasped Bunter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent minor. "I'll tell the fellows this! Ha, ha, ha!"

And Dicky Nugent departed from Study No. 1, yelling. Bunter did not heed him. He blinked excitedly at the captain of the Remove.

"What's going to be done, Wharton?" he exclaimed.

"Done?" repeated Wharton.

"Yes. Suppose you call all the fellows——"

"Call all the fellows?"

"And seize him!" said Bunter.

"Seize him?" gasped Wharton.

"Yes—before he can get away, you know. Mind, the reward belongs to me," added Bunter anxiously. "That's understood. I recognised him, you know—I can identify him. You fellows can't put in for the reward. The reward belongs to me. You understand that?"

Harry Wharton stepped down from the chair, upon which he had been mounted to tack up the picture.

"You burbling bandersnatch," he said. "You've got that reward on the brain. You're beginning to fancy that you see an escaped convict round every corner. Chuck it!"

"He's here—at Greyfriars—he may be here to rob the house—or to murder the Head—or—or——"

"Chuck it!" roared Wharton, exasperated. "If you say the word convict again we'll bump you, hard."

"I say, you fellows, that convict——"

"That does it! Collar him!"

"Yaroooh! Leggo! Oh, my hat! Yoooop!"

Bump!

Billy Bunter, in the grasp of Wharton and Nugent, smote the floor of Study No. 1. He roared as he smote.

"There!" gasped Wharton. "Now go

and pull somebody else's leg, you fat chump."

"Yaroooooooh!"

"Roll him out!"

"Whooooop!"

Billy Bunter was rolled out into the Remove passage, and the door of Study No. 1 slammed after him. He rolled and roared.

Whether Billy Bunter had seen an escaped convict walking down Masters' passage at Greyfriars, or only fancied that he had seen one, it was clear, at least, that Study No. 1 had no use for the story.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Alarming!

WINGATE, of the Sixth, grinned as he looked into the Rag that evening. It was a quarter of an hour late for bed-time for the Lower School—but on first day of the term, many things were late. The Lower School did not seem to be ready for bed, as it was. At one end of the Rag, Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth, were penned up behind a barricade of tables, chairs, and other furniture, sustaining a frontal attack from the Removites. The din was terrific, and the combat excited, and the casualties numerous. Books and cushions flew through the air, yells and roars and howls resounded. George Wingate, of the Sixth, grinned. Obviously the Lower School had not lost their energy during the Christmas vacation. They had returned to Greyfriars as lively as ever, or a little livelier.

"Dorm!" shouted Wingate.

In the uproar, he was not heard, or at least not heeded. He strode into the Rag and roared.

"Chuck it! Dorm! Do you hear?"

Skinner of the Remove was about to hurl a cushion among the Fourth-Form foe. He changed its direction slightly as he hurled it; feeling that a fellow couldn't be blamed if a missile landed on a Sixth-Form prefect by accident in a moment of such excitement.

The cushion landed, and Wingate gave a howl as he staggered against the wall.

"Oh! You young rascals!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! It's Wingate!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Who threw that cushion?" roared Wingate, in wrath.

"Echo answers who!" murmured Skinner, making himself as small as possible in the crowd. It was a good thing, in Skinner's opinion, to biff a Sixth-Form man with a cushion; but like the gentleman in the poem, Skinner preferred to do his good deeds by stealth.

"You noisy young rascals!" exclaimed Wingate, allowing the incident of the cushion to drop; really, it would have been very difficult to pick out the offender from the mob. "Do you know you can be heard all over the school?"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Harry Wharton, laughing.

"Well, chuck it, and get off to dorm."

"First night, Wingate!" shouted a dozen fellows. "We're always late on first night."

"You're late already. Get a move on."

"Oh, run away and play!" came a voice from nowhere in particular.

"Eh! Who said that?" exclaimed Wingate.

"Some person or persons unknown," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Wingate had his ashplant under his arm. He slipped it down into his hand.



The din in the Rag had reached a terrific pitch when George Wingate strode into the room. A cushion, hurled by Skinner, landed full in his face and the next moment he was sent staggering back. "Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry. "It's Wingate!" (See Chapter 10.)

This was a sign that business was intended, and the Remove fellows cheerfully accepted the inevitable, and prepared to march off to dorm.

"Anyhow, we've walloped the Fourth!" said Johnny Bull.

"The walloping was terrific!"

"Not in your lifetime!" gasped Temple of the Fourth. "We'd have kicked the lot of you out of the Rag in another minute."

"I say, Wingate, wait ten seconds while we thrash these kids!" appealed Fry of the Fourth.

There were signs of a renewal of the combat on the side of the Remove, at that. But Wingate intervened, and the Lower Fourth were shepherded out of the Rag, leaving the Upper Fourth jeering and cat-calling after them as they went. It fell to Loder of the Sixth to see lights out for the Fourth that night; and Gerald Loder was enjoying a smoke in Walker's study, and was in no hurry to attend to his duties. Temple, Dabney & Co. remained in possession of the field of battle.

Every Lower School man at Greyfriars took the fullest advantage, as a matter of course, of the relaxation of discipline on first night. The Remove were heard far and wide as they marched to their dormitory; and, meeting some Shell fellows on the way, they collared those Shell fellows and rolled them along a landing. Hobson and Hoskins and Stewart of the Shell were left in a dusty and breathless state, when Wingate succeeded in driving on the Remove. He got them to the dormitory at last, and even then there were several fellows missing. They turned up one by one, with the exception of Billy

Bunter. That fat and fatuous member of the Remove was still absent, and Wingate was growing a little cross.

"Where's Bunter, Todd?" he called out.

"Ask me another," answered Peter Todd cheerfully.

"He's your study-mate."

"That's my misfortune, not my fault," answered Peter.

"The young rascal! I'll give him six!" exclaimed Wingate. "You fags will be up till midnight at this rate."

"That's all right, Wingate," said Squiff. "Don't mind us. Look here, we'll play leap-frog while you go and look for Bunter."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Does anyone know where he is?" demanded the captain of Greyfriars, without heeding Squiff's playful suggestion.

"Might be in Smithy's study," said Hazeldene.

"My study!" exclaimed the Bounder of Greyfriars.

"Yes; you have a lot of tuck—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Why, I—I—I—" ejaculated the Bounder.

The fact that Vernon-Smith had brought a supply of tuck from home made it quite probable that Bunter was in his study, too busily occupied to remember bed-time.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes somebody!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as there was a rapid patter of footfalls in the dormitory passage.

"Here he comes!"

It was Bunter, and evidently he was in a hurry. He burst into the dormitory

at a wild rush, and bumped into Wingate of the Sixth.

"Help!" he roared.

"You fat young ass!" shouted Wingate, shoving the Owl of the Remove off with no gentle hand.

Bunter sat down quite suddenly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I—I say, you fellows, shut the door!" he howled. "Lock the door! Put the beds against it! Help!"

"Oh, my hat! What's the row, Bunter?"

"What the thump—"

"Is this a lark?" demanded Wingate, staring at the gasping Owl of the Remove. "What do you mean, Bunter?"

"He's there!" gasped Bunter.

"Who's there?" shrieked Wingate.

"The convict!"

"The—the what?"

"Convict No. 19!" shrieked Bunter. "I ran into him in the passage. I believe he's after me. Help!"

"You fat chump!" roared Wharton. "Are you spinning that silly yarn again?"

"Help!"

"Is he mad?" exclaimed Wingate, in astonishment.

"More or less," said Peter Todd.

"Rather more than less, I think."

Wingate grasped the fat junior by the shoulder, jerked him to his feet, and shook him forcibly.

"Now, you young ass—"

"Yaroooooh!"

"What do you mean?"

"Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

(Continued on page 16.)

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(Continued from page 13.)

Shake, shake, shake! George Wingate of the Sixth seemed to be losing his temper a little. As a matter of fact, the Lower Fourth were rather trying to the temper on first night of the term.

"Now tell me what you are burbling about," exclaimed the Greyfriars captain angrily.

"Oooch! D-d-don't shake me like that," gurgled Bunter. "If you make my glasses fall off—"

"What?"

"If they get bub-bub-bub-broken you'll have to pip-pip-pay for them, you know!" gasped Bunter.

"Bunter's been seeing convicts all day long, Wingate." Harry Wharton explained. "There's a reward of fifty pounds for an escaped convict, and Bunter's prepared to recognise anybody as the man."

"He's here!" shrieked Bunter.

"Who's here, you babbling little idiot?"

"The convict! I've just seen him again, coming upstairs," howled Bunter. "I tell you he's in the House. I nearly ran into him on the stairs, and I ran for my life. He's got a revolver. I feel sure he's got a revolver. Oh dear! I'm not going to bed with that escaped convict in the house. We may all be murdered in our beds."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The prospect of being murdered in their beds by an escaped convict, who was wandering about the House, did not seem to alarm the merry Removites. They yelled with laughter.

"You can cackle!" howled Bunter. "I tell you I'm not going to bed till that convict is collared. It ain't safe."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You utter young ass!" said Wingate, half laughing, in spite of his exasperation. "There are no escaped convicts in the House. Turn into bed at once!"

"I saw him."

"Turn in!" rapped out Wingate.

"But I tell you—"

Whack!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter, as the prefect's ashplant whacked on his fat person. "Ow! Wow! Wooh!"

"Now turn in."

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Bunter seemed to realise that Wingate's ashplant was more dangerous than the escaped convict—if any. He turned in.

"Now if there's any row in this dorm to-night, I shall come back, and there'll be trouble," said Wingate warningly.

And he put out the light and left the Remove to slumber—if they liked. From the buzz of cheery voices that followed the closing of the door, however, it looked as if slumber in the Lower Fourth dormitory was still afar.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bunter in Danger!

BILLY BUNTER quaked in his bed.

For once he did not glide swiftly into the comforting arms of Morpheus. Bunter had sampled the luck in Smithy's study, appreciatively

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and extensively; and, having loaded himself far above the Plimsoll line, he would, in ordinary circumstances, have been prepared to sink into happy slumber, and dream that he was enjoying that feed over again. But slumber was banished by the bluest of blue funk!

Convict No. 19 was after him! Bunter had no doubt about that. It was he, William George Bunter, who had set the police on the track of the hunted man, though not with successful results. He, William George Bunter, had recognised him in Courtfield, and but for Loder's scepticism, the villain would have been seized there and then.

Now the desperate rascal was at Greyfriars, and Bunter felt that he, William George Bunter, was the intended victim. For what could the man want at Greyfriars at all, if he was not there on Bunter's account? And Bunter was sure that he was there. It was true that he had only seen the convict by the light of matches on a dark night, and equally true that his sight was not of the clearest at the best of times. But he was sure. The man he had seen once at Courtfield, and twice at Greyfriars, was George Waring, Convict No. 19, of Blackmoor Prison. He was quite positive about that. So, instead of sinking into balmy slumber, Bunter quaked, in momentary fear of hearing the stealthy tread of Convict No. 19.

"I say, you fellows," he quavered, when Wingate was gone, "some of you get out and lock the door. Put a bed against it."

"Fathead!" answered Bob Cherry.

"The convict may be here any minute—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"This is the first I've heard of the convict," chuckled Skinner. "Let's hear about him. You dreamed this after an extra allowance of Christmas pudding, I suppose, Bunter?"

"You silly ass! It's true."

"How can it be true when you're telling it?" argued Skinner. "The two things don't agree."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's hear the yarn," said the Bounder. "There really is an escaped convict somewhere; I saw it in the papers in the vac. Man got away from Blackmoor Prison."

"That's the man!" gasped Bunter.

"And you've seen him here at Greyfriars?" chuckled the Bounder.

"Yes; twice."

"Walking about the passages and stairs, you know," chortled Bob Cherry. "So exactly like what an escaped convict would do if he got into the House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I can't make that out at all," confessed Bunter. "He walks about the House as cool as you please, just as if he belonged here."

"He would!" chuckled Tom Redwing; and there was a roar of laughter in the Remove dormitory. That an escaped convict might possibly hide somewhere about Greyfriars was admissible. That an escaped convict would stroll about the passages as if he belonged to the place was highly improbable. But improbabilities did not matter a straw to William George Bunter. He knew what he knew.

"But where did you make his acquaintance?" asked Skinner. "Been visiting your relations this Christmas?"

"Beast! It was at Wharton Lodge that—"

"A relation of Wharton's?" asked Skinner. "Dash it all, Bunter, don't give away Wharton's family secrets to the whole Form."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I came on him in a woodcutter's hut.

He was hiding there from the police. He was Waring—"

"What was he wearing?"

"I mean, his name was Waring."

"Blessed if I ever heard of a man's name wearing anything!" said Skinner. "What was his name wearing?"

"You silly chump, his name was George Waring, and he was No. 19, and a ruffianly convict. I had a fearful struggle with him, and had nearly overpowered him when he drew a knife—"

"Revolver," said Bob Cherry. "It was a revolver last time; in fact, three revolvers."

"I mean a revolver. He drew a revolver and pressed the point to my chest—I mean the muzzle."

"He pressed the point of the knife to your muzzle?" asked Skinner. "I suppose he thought you talked too much."

"No, you idiot; he pressed the muzzle of the revolver to my chest."

"And shot you dead?" asked Skinner sympathetically.

"No, you chump; of course not!"

"What a pity!" sighed Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That convict must be an utter rotter," said Skinner. "He might have finished off Bunter while he had a chance. If he had been an Old Boy of Greyfriars, I think he would have done it for the sake of the school. What a wasted opportunity!"

"Is there any more, Bunter?" asked Peter Todd, with a yawn.

"Yes, lots. I told the police all about it, and they got after him, but they let him slip through their fingers. Practically did me out of the reward!" said Bunter indignantly. "These fellows know it's true; they were there when the police-inspector came to see me about it."

"That much is true," said Wharton. "Bunter really did see an escaped convict hiding in a woodcutter's hut, and was frightened out of his silly wits."

"I wasn't frightened!" roared Bunter. "But it ain't safe to go to bed with escaped convicts walking about the House. He knows I've spotted him, and he's after me. He knows I saw him in Courtfield this afternoon, and he's come to Greyfriars to polish me off. He can't be here for any other reason."

"More power to his elbow," said Micky Desmond.

"Beast!"

Harold Skinner slipped silently out of bed. On tiptoe he crossed to the door of the dormitory. Bunter, whose sight left much to be desired in the daylight, could not see at all in the dark, and was happily unconscious of the playful Skinner's proceedings.

"He's after me," insisted Bunter. "I'm absolutely certain that he's after me. What else can he be at Greyfriars for?"

"Walking about the passages looking for Bunter!" chortled Vernon-Smith. "Nobody asking him what he's doing here, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cackling asses!" groaned Bunter. "He may be here any minute now the light's out; the door may open any second—"

Bunter broke off with a howl of affright. Quite noisily the door-handle turned and the door opened and shut again. Heavy footsteps came tramping across from the door.

"Yow-ow! It's him! Help!" howled Bunter.

"Who on earth—" began Bob Cherry, sitting up in bed and peering through the darkness.

"Where's Bunter?" asked a deep, almost sepulchral voice,

"Yow-ow-ow! I'm not here!" yelled Bunter.

"Where's Bunter? I'm after his blood!"

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter rolled out of his bed and dived underneath it. The heavy foot-steps came to his bedside.

"Ha! He is gone!" exclaimed the deep, terrifying voice. "He shall not escape the vengeance of Convict No. 20—"

"No. 19!" chuckled Bob Cherry. He had struck a match, and recognised Skinner standing by Bunter's bed.

"I mean No. 19! Where is Bunter? He must die!"

"Yow-ow-ow! Help!"

"Roll out, Bunter!" roared Bolsover major. "Here he is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Seize him in that grasp of iron!" yelled Nugent.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Blood must be shed!" said Skinner in a deep, deep voice. "Bunter, prepare to meet your doom!"

Billy Bunter, huddling under the bed in dire terror, seemed quite unprepared to meet his doom. He roared for help. The Removites roared with laughter. That circumstance alone might have convinced Bunter that there was no escaped convict in the dormitory; but in a state of blue funk Bunter was beyond reasoning. He roared and yelled, amid howls of laughter from every other bed in the dormitory.

In the midst of the merriment the dormitory door opened again—unheard. It was not till the light was suddenly switched on that the Removites became aware that Mr. Quelch had arrived on the scene. The Remove master stared grimly into the room.

"Cave!" gasped Squiff.

"What does this uproar mean?" demanded Mr. Quelch severely.

"Yaroooh! Help!"

"Skinner, what are you doing out of bed? Bunter! Where is Bunter? Wharton, where is Bunter?" called out Mr. Quelch. "I can hear his voice."

"Under his bed, I think, sir," gasped the captain of the Remove.

"In the name of all that is absurd, what is Bunter doing under his bed?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch testily. "Bunter!"

"Yaroooh!"

"Come out from under that bed at once!"

"Is he gone?"

"What! Is who gone?"

"The convict."

"The—the—the what?"

"The convict! Oh dear! Help! Telephone for the police!"

"Is the boy out of his senses?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch. "Is this some foolish practical joke on that absurd boy?"

"I—I—I think Bunter fancied I was an escaped convict, sir," said Skinner demurely. "I really don't know why, sir."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Silence! You ridiculous boy, Bunter—"

"Help!"

"Go back to bed at once, Skinner! You should not play these absurd jokes on a foolish boy like Bunter. Bunter, if you do not come out from under that bed immediately I shall cane you!"

Bunter crawled out at last. Even upon his obtuse brain it had dawned that his fat leg had been pulled. He gave Skinner a furious blink, and Skinner grinned cheerily in response.

"Go back to bed at once, Bunter!"

"But—but the convict, sir—"

"You utterly ridiculous boy, it was

Skinner playing a foolish practical joke on—"

"I know, sir, but there's a convict in the House—"

"A convict in the House!" repeated Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, walking about—"

"Walking about?"

"Looking for me, sir! I don't feel safe! It ain't safe to have escaped convicts in the House, sir," gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch looked at Bunter as if he would eat him.

"Get into bed at once, Bunter! Another word of this ridiculous nonsense, and I shall cane you."

"But, sir—" gasped Bunter.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

Bunter quaked, and hopped into bed. Mr. Quelch surveyed the long row of recumbent Removites with a basilisk eye.

"If there is any further disturbance in this dormitory to-night, I shall cane

of caning them all round, agreed that it was time to go to sleep; and it was time; therefore, for Bunter to shut up. Bunter never was very willing to shut up, and now he was more unwilling than ever. But there was nothing doing, and he shut up at last—and as he heard the regular breathing of the fellows dropping off to sleep, he wondered how they could settle down calmly to slumber, heedless of his terrible peril.

That terrible peril was still in his mind, when he began to snore himself; but fortunately he dreamed, not of escaped convicts, but of the feed he had enjoyed in Smithy's study.

And when the rising bell clanged out at Greyfriars in the frosty winter morning, Bunter woke up and found that he was still alive. He had not, after all, been murdered in his bed, which was fortunate—or unfortunate, according to the point of view.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Rough on the Second Form!

ON the second day of the term, Greyfriars began to settle down: fellows dropped into their places, boxes were unpacked, late comers turned up; classes began, a little work was done—not much, it is true, but enough to give a foretaste of the wrath to come, as it were. Nobody liked settling down to work after the freedom of the holidays, and probably the masters liked it no better than their pupils, though they were sometimes suspected of taking a fiendish delight in it.

The Fifth Form came off best, because it was easy to switch Mr. Prout off lessons by a sly allusion to winter sports in Switzerland, upon which subject Mr. Prout was always eager and willing to expatiate. Fitzgerald of the Fifth had a bet on with Blundell, the captain of that Form, that he would keep Prouty on winter sports during the whole of the hour supposed to be devoted to Latin prose that morning, and Fitzgerald lost his bet only by seven minutes.

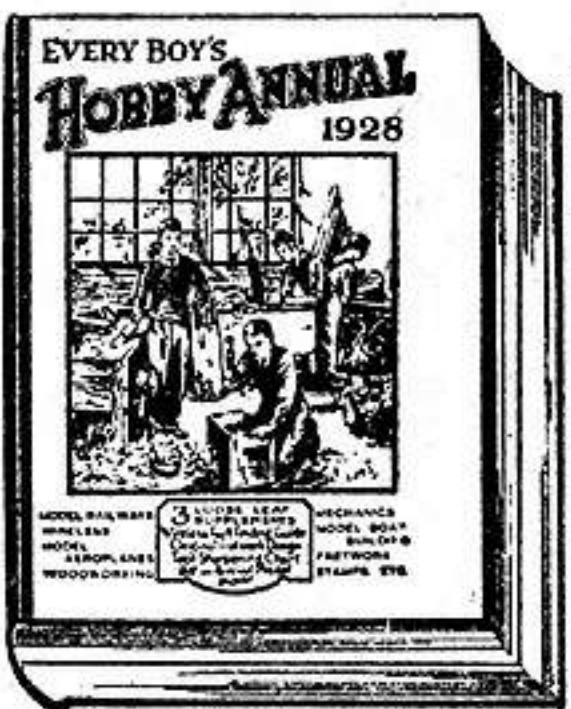
The Shell found Mr. Hacker much less amenable to the voice of the charmer. Mr. Hacker had returned to Greyfriars with a slight cold, and either the cold or the Shell had a deteriorating effect on his temper: Hobson & Co. almost perspired in class that morning, cold as it was.

The Fourth found Mr. Capper rather less easy-going than he became later in the term, when apparently he gave the Fourth up as a bad job. The Remove discovered that Mr. Quelch's temper, always a little acid, had become a little more acidulated. Work, Mr. Quelch told his Form, was the order of the day. The Remove were painfully conscious of the unpleasant fact, and thought that it was in the worst of taste for Quelch to rub it in.

Even the Third, who usually had an easy time with Mr. Wiggins, found that their lines had not fallen in pleasant places. Mr. Wiggins was an absent-minded gentleman who forgot nearly everything; he would forget his books for a class, and sometimes forget the class itself; he would forget lines when he imposed them, and forgot his intention of reporting dire offenders to the Head. His Form made fun of him, but they sincerely wished him long life and good health: as in the case of Caesar of old, they feared there might a worse come in his place. But even Mr. Wiggins, at the beginning of term, had a fund of

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every boy in the Form—severely!" he said.

With that, Mr. Quelch put out the light and withdrew.

"Gentlemen, chaps, and fellows, we'd better take a nap," yawned Peter Todd. "Quelch means business; and we don't want to give him all that hefty exercise, at his time of life. He's getting elderly, you know."

"I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter."

"But that convict—"

"Cheese it."

"That awful convict—"

"That convict is played out," said Vernon-Smith. "Say convict again and you'll get my bolster."

"But, I say, you fellows—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"If I'm killed to-night—"

"You'll be half-killed, at least, if you don't shut up."

"Beast!"

Bunter was compelled to realise that his awful danger—if any—did not worry his fellow Removites in the very least. The Removites, who most decidedly did not want to give Mr. Quelch the trouble

energy which he had accumulated during the holidays, having had a much-needed rest from the Third; and he laid down an alarming programme of work for his Form—awful to contemplate, but for the consoling thought that Mr. Wiggins would probably forget all about it in the course of a day or two.

But of all the Forms at Greyfriars, no Form suffered or repined as the Second Form suffered and repined.

The Second were on the verge of mutiny.

Indeed, had mutiny been practicable, those lively young gentlemen would have gone right over the verge. Fortunately, it wasn't.

The fags told one another, in thrilling voices and with dark looks, that they wouldn't stand it.

In truth, it was a serious state of affairs. Under Mr. Twigg, the Second Form had had a happy time. Old Twigg was too good-natured to give a fellow a really bad report. Even Sammy Bunter generally got off fairly well. The two Bunters at Greyfriars were very much alike; but whereas Mr. Quelch often made William George fairly squirm and wriggle for his laziness, Mr. Twigg only reprimanded Sammy Bunter gently, or passed him over with a sigh.

Sammy Bunter could point triumphantly to the fact that he knew no more at the end of the term than at the beginning; yet if Twigg went so far as to cane him, which seldom happened, he never administered more than a flick; the first yell from Sammy softened his heart, and Sammy was always ready with a yell. And as Sammy was the laziest and slackest fellow in the Second, the others got off still more easily.

From this earthly paradise, the Greyfriars Second were rudely awakened now. Twigg was gone, and a new master reigned in his stead; and the new master was a beast, and not merely a beast, but a priceless beast, an unspeakable beast, an incalculable beast, a prize beast, the most frightful and unheard-of beast that ever was or could be.

Certainly nobody, looking at Mr. Eric Gilmore, would have taken him for any sort of a beast. He was a handsome young man, tall, athletic, slim but strong, with a good-natured smile on his good-looking face. He was known to be a good man at games, and was already on the best of terms with Wingate of the Sixth, and other great men of the Greyfriars games.

Nevertheless, he was the very last word in beasts, according to his Form. He contrasted so completely, and so painfully, with Mr. Twigg. Even on the first day of the term, the Second had had a sample of his truculence; the brute expected them to know things, or, at least, to want to know things. He expected them to have whole sets of the required books for their lessons, and even to have those books in good condition. He had commented sharply on the Red Indians, drawn in red ink, who swarmed on the war-path all over Gatty's Latin grammar, though it had to be admitted that he did not recognise these artistic productions as drawings at all, but supposed that Gatty had carelessly spilt ink over his book.

Dicky Nugent had had to replace, at a cost of eighteenpence, a book he had sold to Fisher T. Fish of the Remove, the previous term, for twopence. It was true that Nugent major found the eighteenpence; still, that did not affect the principle of the thing.

The Second commenced classes under

Mr. Gilmore with the gloomiest anticipations.

Their worst anticipations were more than realised.

Eric Gilmore was openly shocked by the state of their knowledge, or want of knowledge. He asked them how they expected to pass examinations; and it was useless to tell him that they did not want to pass examinations. You couldn't tell masters these things; besides, Form masters were supposed to know them without being told.

That morning the Second fairly perspired in class, and looked and thought unutterable things.

That afternoon they longed to lynch Mr. Gilmore, to boil him in oil, or to dispose of him by even more unpleasant methods.

Mr. Twigg, nursing his influenza far from Greyfriars, would have felt flattered had he known how passionately the Second Form yearned for his return to the school.

There really was no limit to the iniquities of this man Gilmore! Gatty kept a volume of the "Holiday Annual" under his desk to relieve the tedium of lessons. Mr. Twigg had never noticed it in a term. Mr. Gilmore noticed it in five minutes, and the precious volume was taken away and locked in the Form master's desk.

Sammy Bunter consoled himself in the afternoon with a bag of aniseed-balls. Perhaps the powerful scent of that refreshment betrayed him. The Beast, as the Second Form had already named Mr. Gilmore, made his swoop. The aniseed-balls were ruthlessly confiscated. The Beast added insult to injury by mentioning that the Form-room was not the proper place for guzzling. Sammy was moved to indignant protest.

"Mr. Twigg never said anything, sir!"

"Did he not?" asked Mr. Gilmore, with his pleasant smile.

"Never!" said Sammy.

"I fear that you must have imposed very much upon Mr. Twigg's kindness," said Mr. Gilmore.

"We liked Mr. Twigg, sir!" said Gatty boldly, implying as plainly as he dared that he did not like Mr. Twigg's successor at all.

"I trust that you will like me," said Mr. Gilmore cheerily. The Second had to admit that Mr. Gilmore had a very pleasant smile. "But we must not talk—time is precious!"

The Second utterly disagreed with Mr. Gilmore on that point; but the Form master had, unfortunately, to be given his head.

After class that day Frank Nugent looked for his minor, to inquire how he was getting on with his new master.

Dicky looked at him dolorously.

"Awful!" he said. "I say, Frank, you offered last term to help me with my Latin."

"The offer's still open," said Frank, with a grin.

"Look here, I'll come to your study after prep with the Beast. Life won't be worth living in the Second if a man doesn't pull up a bit!" said Dicky Nugent dismally. "He doesn't let a fellow off if a fellow doesn't know a thing, you know. He takes it for granted that a fellow wants to know, and keeps on till a fellow does know! I'm blessed if I don't think it will be easier to work than to slack so long as we have that awful beast!"

Frank Nugent chuckled. He sympathised with his minor; but he could not help thinking that a Form master like Mr. Gilmore was exactly what the Second wanted, if they had only known it. Certainly a master with whom it

was easier to work than to slack, was likely to do the Second Form a lot of good.

"There he is!" added Dicky. "Look at the brute! You wouldn't think he was such a beast to look at him."

Frank Nugent glanced at Mr. Gilmore, who was chatting with Mr. Quelch in the doorway of the House. Certainly he did not think that the handsome, good-tempered-looking young man looked a beast.

"Looks a decent chap, Dicky," he said.

"Looks!" snorted Dicky. "I'll come up to your study after prep, Frank."

"Do, old chap!" said Nugent.

Dicky scuttled away as Mr. Gilmore, leaving the Remove master, came out into the quad. The young master sauntered away, apparently taking a stroll round Greyfriars, of which he had seen little, so far. Frank Nugent looked for Harry Wharton & Co, and found them walking under the elms. Bob Cherry was grinning.

"Bunter's seen his convict again, Franky!"

"Ha, ha! Where?"

"Walking along the Form-room passage!" chuckled Bob. "I'm beginning to think that the fat idiot is seeing visions. Who can it be that he takes for the convict?"

"Goodness knows!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is! Seen him again, Bunter?" roared Bob.

"Ow! Yes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, he's in the Cloisters now!" gasped Billy Bunter. "He passed only six feet from me——"

"You potty ass!" growled Johnny Bull. "How could he be here?"

"He is here!" yelled Bunter. "You fellows go into the Cloisters now and you'll see him, walking as cool as you please!"

"Let's go!" said Wharton. "Come on, Bunter!"

"No fear! I'm not going near him—he's dangerous! You fellows go and collar him, and I—I'll go and get help!"

And Billy Bunter scudded into the House, perhaps to get help, but more likely to place himself at a safe distance from the supposed convict.

The Famous Five trotted across to the Cloisters. That Convict Nineteen was there they certainly did not believe for a moment; but they were curious to see whether anybody was there whom Bunter could possibly have taken for the fugitive from Blackmoor.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Somebody's here!" exclaimed Bob Cherry, as the juniors entered the old stone Cloisters. "Who's this?"

"Ha, ha, ha! It's Mr. Gilmore, the master of the Second—my minor's jolly old Form master!" chuckled Nugent.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Doubting Thomases!

ERIC GILMORE stopped in his leisurely walk along the dusky old Cloisters, and glanced at the chums of the Remove severely. The juniors stopped, and coloured a little. The idea that Bunter had taken the new master of the Second for the escaped convict made them roar, and they really could not help it; but they realised that it was not quite good manners to rush up to a master and burst out laughing.

"Excuse us, sir!" said Harry Wharton. "We—we—we——"

"The excusefulness is terrific

honoured sahib!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh politely.

"Eh—what?" ejaculated Mr. Gilmore. Hurree Singh's wonderful English was new to him.

"We regret terrifically having exceeded the limit of excellent and polite-mannerfulness," explained Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "Our esteemed and ridiculous legs have been pulled by a frabjous fathead!"

"Dear me!" said Mr. Gilmore.

"May I ask if you've seen anyone in the Cloisters, sir, while you've been here?" asked Wharton.

"No one. Why do you ask?"

"A fellow in our Form has an idea in his head that an escaped convict is hanging about the school," said Harry, trying to speak gravely, but grinning in spite of himself. "He's just told us that the man was in the Cloisters now."

Mr. Gilmore stared for a moment, and then smiled.

through his big spectacles with a very anxious look.

"I say, you fellows, did you see him?" he exclaimed breathlessly, as the Famous Five came in.

"You fat chump, there was nobody in the Cloisters, except Mr. Gilmore," said Harry. "We asked him, and he said there was nobody there. If you're not potty, you've been dreaming!"

"Turn round, Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"Eh—what for?"

"To be kicked!"

"Slew him round, you fellows," said Bob. "You see, Bunter, we're fed-up with escaped convicts. A kick or two—"

"A kick in time saves nine!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—leggo, you silly owls, I tell you—yaroooh!"

"Have you been deluding this foolish boy with some absurd practical joke?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch sternly. "I remember that last night he was frightened with some childish story of an escaped convict."

"Nunno!" stammered Harry Wharton. "Bunter really thinks there's an escaped convict hanging about the school, sir."

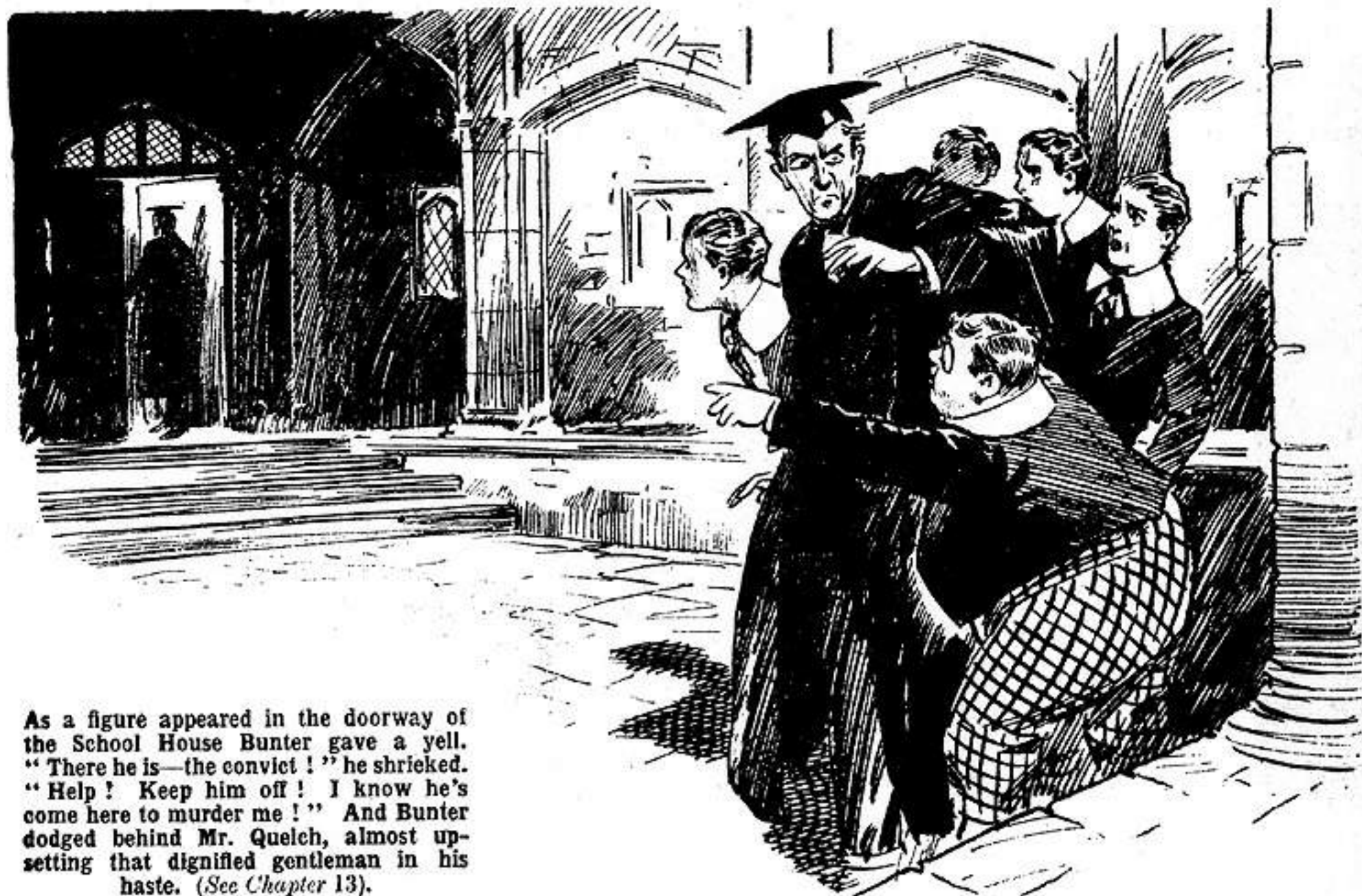
"Nonsense!"

"There is, sir, really and truly," stammered Bunter.

"An escaped convict—at Greyfriars!" articulated Mr. Quelch. "Are you out of your senses, Bunter, to make such a statement?"

"I've seen him, sir. Of course, he ain't dressed like a convict now," explained Bunter. "He's changed his clothes, and looks quite decent, sir."

"Then how do you imagine that he, whoever he may be, is a convict at all?" demanded the Form master.



As a figure appeared in the doorway of the School House Bunter gave a yell. "There he is—the convict!" he shrieked. "Help! Keep him off! I know he's come here to murder me!" And Bunter dodged behind Mr. Quelch, almost upsetting that dignified gentleman in his haste. (See Chapter 13).

"I am afraid you have been the victims of a practical joke," he said. "I do not think there is anyone here; and certainly I should not imagine that an escaped convict would be lurking about the school."

"Oh, it's only Bunter's rot, of course," said Harry. "He's got convicts on the brain since he saw one in the hols. Please excuse us, sir!"

"Certainly," said the Second Form master, with a smile.

The Famous Five hastily retreated from the spot. They rather liked Mr. Gilmore, on his looks, and they were somewhat incensed at having appeared lacking in good manners towards him.

"Let's go and kick Bunter," said Bob Cherry. "It's time he chucked this rot about his giddy convict! I'm fed-up with Convict Nineteen!"

"Same here!" agreed Nugent.

"The samefulness is terrific!"

The chums of the Remove walked back to the House. Billy Bunter was lurking just inside the doorway, blinking out

"What is this?" asked a voice like very cold and sharp steel, and the playful juniors released William George Bunter as Mr. Quelch appeared from nowhere like a gimlet-eyed ghost, and spoke.

"Yaroooh! You silly chumps——"

"Bunter!"

"Oh, is that you, sir?" gasped Bunter, blinking at the Remove master. "I didn't see you, sir. I thought it was some other silly idiot——"

"What!"

"I—I—I mean——"

"Silence! This disturbance in the passages——" began the Remove master, with portentous severity.

"Those silly asses don't believe about the convict, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I say, sir, he ought to be caught, sir! He's a dangerous character, and there's fifty pounds reward, sir."

"What does the boy mean?" asked Mr. Quelch, staring at the Owl of the Remove.

"The convict, sir——"

"What convict?"

"No. 19, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"I know his face, sir."

"You know a convict's face!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

"Yes, sir, just like yours——"

"Like mine?" almost shrieked the Remove master.

"I—I mean, I know his face, just like I know yours, sir!" gasped Bunter. "I don't mean he looks like you, sir. He's quite good-looking, sir, if you come to that."

"Oh, my hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

The expression on Mr. Quelch's face was really extraordinary just then. He did not look like a convict certainly, but he looked a good deal like a Gorgon.

"You incredibly stupid boy!" he exclaimed at last. "If this is intended for impertinence——"

"Oh, no, sir! I—I—— Why, there he is!" yelled Bunter suddenly. "Help! Keep him off! I know he's come here to murder me! Yaroooh!"

Bunter dodged round behind Mr. Quelch, almost upsetting that dignified

gentleman in his haste. Mr. Quelch staggered and whirled round on Bunter.

Smack!

"Yaroooh!"

It was almost unknown for Henry Samuel Quelch to box a fellow's ears. He was far too dignified for such a proceeding. But there were occasions when even the Remove master was human. He gave Bunter a resounding smack; and, seeming to derive solace therefrom, gave him another.

Smack!

"Yoooooo-heoooooooooop!"

"Now, you young rascal!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!"

Mr. Quelch grabbed him by the shoulder.

"You stupid boy, tell me what you mean, at once. You have stated that you have recognised an escaped convict within the precincts of the school. I require to know what you mean. What have you to say?"

"Yaroooh!"

That, apparently, was what Bunter had to say; but it did not seem to satisfy Mr. Quelch. His wrathful hand rose again, and Harry Wharton spoke hastily.

"Bunter really saw an escaped convict in the holidays, sir, and he thinks—"

"How can Bunter possibly have seen anything of the kind?" snapped Mr. Quelch. "What nonsense are you telling me?"

Wharton hurriedly explained. The Remove master listened impatiently; but he was enlightened to some extent. But it was impossible for Wharton to explain why Bunter fancied that he had seen Convict No. 19 again, and within the walls of Greyfriars. That was a mystery to the captain of the Remove.

"I understand, so far," said Mr. Quelch. "Bunter, for what reason have you stated that you have seen this—this fugitive from justice in the school?"

"He's here, sir," groaned Bunter, rubbing his fat ears. "I've seen him six or seven times, sir, walking about the school."

"Cannot you understand, you obtuse young rascal, that no stranger could be walking about the school unquestioned?"

"He's here, sir! He passed while I was speaking to you a few minutes ago," gasped Bunter.

"Did you boys see anyone pass?" asked the Remove master.

"Only Mr. Gilmore, sir."

"This must be looked into," said Mr. Quelch, frowning. "It is impossible for any stranger to be within the school precincts, of course. Bunter, come with me and point out the person, if he exists."

"I—I'd rather not, sir. He—he may have a revolver, sir."

"Do not be absurd! Come at once."

"Oh dear!"

Mr. Quelch marched the Owl of the Remove into the quadrangle. Harry Wharton & Co. looked at one another in wonder.

"If Bunter isn't off his rocker, what on earth does it mean?" asked Frank Nugent. "He's blind enough to mistake anybody for anybody else, but I suppose he can't have taken a Form master for a convict, can he?"

"Ha, ha! Hardly."

"Off his rocker," said Bob Cherry. "He was always nearly off, and now he's quite off."

"The quietfulness is terrific."

From the doorway the Famous Five watched Mr. Quelch and Bunter, so long as they remained in sight. Mr. Quelch obviously did not believe that Bunter had seen Convict No. 19 walking about within the school walls; but he was putting the matter to the test.

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They disappeared into the Cloisters, and the Famous Five gave it up and went to the Remove passage to tea.

Billy Bunter joined them there half an hour later. He was looking dolorous.

"I say, you fellows, Quelch doesn't believe me," he said.

"Go hon."

"He's given me a hundred lines. Makes out that I was spinning a yarn," said Bunter warmly.

"Weren't you?"

"No!" roared Bunter. "I say, you fellows, do you think I'd better go to the Head about it?"

"Not with a yarn like that," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You'd better tell the Head an easier one."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's true!" howled Bunter.

"Then it's a fact that truth is stranger than fiction—as usual. It's not so steep."

Bunter did not go to the Head. Perhaps he thought that Dr. Locke might be as sceptical as Mr. Quelch on the subject. Perhaps he thought that the spread on the table in Study No. 1 was more attractive than an interview with the Head. At all events, he drew a chair to the table and helped himself, and the escaped convict was dismissed from his fat mind while he attended to more important matters.

THE FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Opinion of the Second!

"I'll ask my major!" said Sammy Bunter.

"Good!"

For the first time in the history of the Second Form at Greyfriars a suggestion from Bunter minor was received with unanimous approval.

"Good egg!" said Dicky Nugent.

"A Remove man will be all right."

"Right as rain!" said Gatty.

"And it would have to be a silly ass, or he wouldn't do it," remarked Myers. "Bunter major is a silly ass, just like Sammy."

"Look here—" hooted Sammy.

"But will Bunter major do it?" asked another of the fags.

A crowd of the Second Form were in solemn conclave in their Form-room. The term was three days old now, and in three days the Second were more than fed-up with their new Form-master, Mr. Eric Gilmore. They did not merely detest him. They loathed him.

More work had been done in the Second in three days than the Second were accustomed to put in in three weeks. Knowledge on all sorts of subjects was growing in the Second Form, springing up like mushrooms in a night. As Dicky Nugent had told his major, it was really easier to work than to slack, with a beast like Gilmore; a slacker had all the trouble of dodging the acquisition of knowledge, with the acquisition of the undesired knowledge to follow.

Like the Israelites in the desert, who looked back with longing to the flesh-pots of Egypt, the Second Form looked back to their easy days with Mr. Twigg. The difference between past and present was appalling.

Having agreed on all hands that they wouldn't stand it, the Second had to realise that there was no choice about the matter; they had to stand it. But they could, at least, tell the Beast what they thought of him. Not exactly by word of mouth—there was something in Mr. Gilmore's eye that checked anything of that sort. In class and at prep the Second walked delicately. Ragging in class was quite unknown now; so far

from attempting it, the fags did not even think of it. Nevertheless, they had determined to let the Beast know what his Form thought of him, and it was Gatty who had propounded the masterly wheeze which was adopted.

Gatty had written, in large capital letters, on a sheet of impot paper, the crushing sentence:

WE ALL THINK YOU A BEEST!

This expressed the sentiments of the Second Form to a man. Even the spelling was characteristic of Mr. Twigg's Form.

Capital letters gave no clue to the writer. The paper was carefully folded and placed in an envelope. This was to be delivered to Mr. Gilmore in his study.

It was at that point of the proceedings that a difficulty arose.

Nobody wanted to be the person who delivered the letter.

That it should be delivered, that it had to be delivered, all the Second agreed. It was exactly what Gilmore wanted to open his eyes as to the opinion of his Form. Once he knew what the Second thought of him there might be a possibility of amendment on his part. At least there was satisfaction in "telling him off." He couldn't pick on the fellow who had written the letter, and he couldn't very well punish the whole Form on suspicion. It was a masterly move, only there was a great shyness in the Second about the delivery of the letter. Not a man was willing to convey it to Mr. Gilmore.

So Sammy Bunter's suggestion was very welcome. There was still a question as to whether Bunter major would do it. He was fool enough—that was admitted at once. Nevertheless—

"Look here, fetch your major here, Sammy," said Dicky Nugent. "Tell him we've got some tarts."

"That'll fetch him!" grinned Sammy.

And he departed in search of William George of the Remove.

He returned within five minutes with the fat and fatuous youth. Evidently the story of the tarts had "fetched" Billy Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove had rolled into the Second Form-room with a genial grin on his face. Most Remove men would have disdained a feed with the Second. Bunter disdained the Second, but not the feed. He blinked round inquiringly. There was no sign of the tarts.

"Look here, Sammy told me—" began Bunter warmly.

"That's all right," said Nugent minor hastily.

"Is it?" grunted Bunter. It did not seem to him all right, unless the tarts were in evidence.

"Myers is just going down to the tuck shop," explained Dicky Nugent.

"Oh, all right! I'll wait."

Bunter sat down on a desk.

"There's a letter for Gilmore there," remarked Dicky Nugent in a careless sort of way.

Bunter blinked at the envelope lying on a desk.

"What about it?" he asked.

"It's got to be taken to him."

"Take it, then."

"You take it, old chap," said Dicky.

"Rot!" replied Bunter.

"The fact is, we never go to Gilmore's study," said Gatty. "We bar him, you know."

"Leave it where it is, then," said Bunter.

The fags exchanged glances. Obviously it would not do to tell Bunter what was in the letter. Even Bunter was not ass enough to deliver such a letter if he knew what was inside it.

"Well, you see, he ought to have it," said Gatty. "He—hem—might think that one of the chaps ought to have taken it to him. Look here, Bunter, you take it. He can't give you lines. See?"

"He wouldn't give you lines for taking him a letter," said Bunter.

"He's such a beast, you know," explained Gatty. "It's practically impossible to see him without getting lines or something."

"Only he can't line a Remove man," said Myers.

"Look here, Billy, you take it, and we'll have the tarts ready when you come back," said Sammy.

Billy Bunter blinked at the fags. A brighter youth than William George Bunter might have suspected that there was some trick in all this. But Bunter's thoughts, naturally, ran on the tarts. It was only a couple of minutes' walk to Mr. Gilmore's study; not a very great exertion, even for Bunter. He rolled off the desk.

"Oh, all right!" he said. "I'm not afraid of your blessed Form-master. You fags are a funky lot."

The Second Form did not hurl themselves on Bunter and slay him. The delivery of that important letter, conveying to Mr. Gilmore the considered opinion of the Form, came first.

"Well, go it, old chap," said Sammy.

Bunter picked up the letter and rolled out of the Form-room.

The fags looked at one another breathlessly.

"It's all right now!" breathed Gatty.

"It's worth two or three tarts, what?"

"Two!" said Nugent minor. "I don't see wasting three."

"What about one?" asked Sammy.

"Well, we said tarts," said Dicky Nugent. "Make it two. I say, though, let's see that he really takes the letter."

"Yes, rather! Come on!"

A crowd of fags stalked Bunter stealthily along the passages. Almost breathlessly they followed him till they saw him arrive at the door of Mr. Gilmore's study in Masters' passage. At the corner of that passage they stopped, peering round the corner with gasping interest. They saw Billy Bunter raise a fat hand and tap at the door.

Apparently he was bidden to enter, for he opened the door and went in.

"Now!" breathed Gatty.

"Now—Why, what—what—what the—" stuttered Nugent minor.

From the study of the Second Form master there came a sudden wild yell of terror. The next moment Billy Bunter came tearing out as if the study were on fire, yelling as he came.

"Help! Help! Help!"

THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Convict!

"**H**ELP!" Bunter roared as he came down the passage.

His fat face was terrified, and the speed with which he negotiated the passage was remarkable, considering the weight he had to carry.

The letter was still clutched in his fat hand. Bunter had forgotten it; evidently he had not delivered it. He came racing down Masters' passage, letting out a wild yell at every step.

"Help! Help!"

The fags stared at him aghast. That Eric Gilmore was a beast all the Second knew only too well. But they had been far from expecting him to have this extraordinary effect upon a Remove man.

HARD LINES ON BILLY BUNTER!

There's a £50 Reward for the person who can give information to the police that will lead to the apprehension of Convict Nineteen, who has escaped from prison.

Billy Bunter, of the Remove, naturally, is mighty keen to handle that munificent sum; what is more, Bunter is positive in his own mind that the escaped gaol-bird is at Greyfriars—in disguise!

Poor old Billy is in an awful flutter; no one will believe his story, and that £50 seems to be fading from his vision like a beautiful dream.

Every Magnetite will thoroughly enjoy

"CONVICT NINETEEN!"

by Frank Richards,
next Saturday's top-
ping story of the Chums
of Greyfriars.

ORDER YOUR COPY OF
THE "MAGNET" TO-DAY,
BOYS!



"What the thump—" gasped Gatty.

"Look out!"

Crash!

Billy Bunter came round the corner like an express train. There were yells from the startled fags as he crashed into them.

Right and left the fags were strewn, under Bunter's hefty charge.

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, scissors!"

"You fat idiot—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Help!" roared Bunter. "It's him! He's there! Yaroooooh! Help!"

Mr. Quelch's door opened, and the Remove master fairly glared out into the passage.

"What is this disturbance?" he thundered.

"Help!"

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Yow-ow! It's him! Help!"

"Bunter! Stop!"

Billy Bunter did not stop. Even his Form-master's terrifying voice had no effect on him. He rushed on and vanished from Mr. Quelch's amazed sight.

"You young ass!" roared Wingate of the Sixth, as the Owl of the Remove bumped into him.

Bunter did not heed. Masters and prefects were nothing to him now. He rushed on to the stairs, and bolted up, taking them two at a time. Wingate stared after him blankly.

"I say, you fellows, help!" yelled Bunter, as he bolted into the Remove passage.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!"

"What's the row?"

"Help!" roared Bunter, staggering breathlessly against the wall. "Oh, dear! I've seen him! It's him! Keep him off! Help!"

"You silly ass!" roared Harry Wharton. "Is it your giddy convict again?"

"Ow! Yes! Help!"

"You potty duffer!" hooted Bob Cherry. "Where have you seen him now?"

"In a study—oh, dear!—a master's study— Oh, crumbs! Sitting there, like—like anything; and I went in, and—and—saw him—ow!"

"You saw the convict in a master's study?" howled Peter Todd.

"Oh, dear! Yes! I—I believe he's after me!" howled Bunter. "I can hear him coming up the stairs now! Keep him off! Yaroooooh!"

Bunter dived into Study No. 7.

"You silly chump!" yelled Redwing.

"It's Quelch!"

"Bunter—it's Mr. Quelch!" shouted Wharton.

But Billy Bunter was past reasoning with. He slammed the door of his study and turned the key in the lock. Behind the locked door he gasped with relief.

Mr. Quelch rustled into the Remove passage. The expression on his face almost scared the Removites.

"Where is Bunter?" demanded Mr. Quelch, in a deep, rumbling voice. "He has created a disturbance in Masters' passage! Where is he?"

"I—I think he went into his study, sir!" stammered Squiff.

Rap! rap! rap!

Mr. Quelch turned the handle of No. 7, and finding the door locked, rapped and rapped again, furiously.

"Yaroooo! Keep off!" yelled Bunter.

"I say, you fellows, keep that beast off. Go away, you villain!"

"Bunter!" shrieked Mr. Quelch.

"Go away!" yelled Bunter. "Send for the police! Oh dear! Help! I won't be murdered! Yaroooooh!"

"The boy must be out of his senses,"

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gasped Mr. Quelch. "Bunter! It is I, your Form-master!"

"Oh!" Bunter recognised the voice at last. "Is that old Quelch? I—I mean, is that Mr. Quelch? Keep him off!"

"There is no one here, Bunter—only myself and your Form-fellows—" Mr. Quelch, in spite of his wrath, spoke soothingly. He really feared that the fat junior had taken leave of his senses. "Isn't that convict there?" gasped Bunter.

"No, no! Open the door, Bunter! Calm yourself, and open the door."

Billy Bunter reluctantly unlocked the door. He peered out into the passage, and was relieved to see only his Form-master and the crowd of amazed Removites.

"Now, Bunter, calm yourself," said Mr. Quelch. "Tell me what has frightened you!"

"That convict, sir!" gasped Bunter. "This seems to be an obsession with the unhappy boy," said Mr. Quelch. His keen eyes could see that Bunter was fairly quivering with terror. "Calm yourself, Bunter. You are safe! Now explain to me why you fancied that you had seen that convict here."

"He's here, sir—" "Where?" "In old Twigg's study—" "What?"

"Mr. Twigg's study, sir!" groaned Bunter. "The Second Form-master's study, sir. I went there and saw him—saw him as plain as I see you, sir—"

"Calm yourself, Bunter! You must surely be able to realise that what you state is impossible."

"I saw him, sir!" gasped Bunter. "He was there, sir, sitting at the table, with a pen in his hand, sir, when I went in."

"This is most extraordinary," said Mr. Quelch. "This boy must be suffer-

ing from delusions. Come with me, Bunter. I will take you to Mr. Gilmore's study and demonstrate that you are in error. Come."

"He—he may have a revolver, sir—"

"Come, come! You surely realise that you are safe in your Form-master's presence," said Mr. Quelch. "I fear that this is a matter for a doctor; but at all events, I will do my best to reassure you, Bunter. Come with me."

"I—I'd rather not, sir—" "Come!"

Mr. Quelch's hand dropped on Bunter's shoulder, and the fat junior was led away down the Remove passage. Nearly every man in the Remove followed. Bunter's extraordinary delusion that an escaped convict was walking about Greyfriars had become a standing joke in the Form; but the juniors realised that the matter was getting serious. Either there was some man in the school whom Bunter took to be Convict No. 19, or else the fat junior was qualifying for Colney Hatch.

Down the Remove staircase went Mr. Quelch with the Owl of the Remove, and after them went a crowd of juniors. Other fellows joined them on the way along the passages; the alarm had spread far and wide. Shell fellows and Fourth, Third and Second, Sixth-form men and Fifth, mingled with the crowd of Removites, and it was quite an army that marched along Masters' passage to the door of Mr. Gilmore's study.

That door was closed; and Mr. Quelch tapped on it.

"Come in!" called out a cheery voice. Mr. Quelch opened the door.

Bunter hung back, gasping.

"I—I won't go in!" he howled. "He's there—" "I will enter first, Bunter," said Mr. Quelch.

He strode into the study: Mr. Gilmore rose from the table, where he had been at work correcting exercises for the Second, with a slightly surprised expression on his face. He had heard the exchange of words at his door.

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Quelch?" the young master asked.

"An extraordinary delusion of a boy in my Form, Mr. Gilmore," said Mr. Quelch. "This boy, Bunter, encountered an escaped convict in the Christmas holidays, and is obsessed with a belief that the man is now within the precincts of the school. I regret very much disturbing you, but in the circumstances you will excuse me."

"Certainly, sir," said Mr. Gilmore, wondering.

"There is, of course, no one but yourself in the study, Mr. Gilmore?"

"No one, Mr. Quelch."

"Bunter! Come into the room," said the Remove master. "You will see with your own eyes that there is no one here but Mr. Gilmore."

"Perhaps—perhaps he's under the table, sir," gasped Bunter.

"Nonsense! Come in, immediately."

"I—I—I—" stammered the Owl of the Remove.

"Shall I help him in, sir?" asked Bob Cherry.

"Certainly, Cherry."

Bob gave the Owl of the Remove a hefty shove. It was really more help than Bunter needed. He went headlong into the study, and landed there on his fat hands and knees, with a howl. There was a chuckle from the crowd in the passage.

"Get up, Bunter!" said Mr. Quelch, frowning.

"Ow! Wow! That beast Cherry has—"

(Continued on next page.)



THIS week you fellows have before you the opening chapters of our new serial story, "The Bulldog Breed!" by George E. Rochester. It's my firm opinion that this new story will make fresh history for the MAGNET, for it's one of the best yarns I have ever had the pleasure of reading. There's that realistic touch about it, and freshness of atmosphere, that speaks eloquently of the master pen. This is the first story dealing with the late War that has ever appeared in our pages, but, honestly, I think it is all the better for having been kept until 1923. Now I am anxious to hear your views on the subject. Not that I fear adverse criticism; there won't be any with "The Bulldog Breed!" If you like the opening chapters you can bet your sweet life that you'll go crazy about the rest of the yarn, for it gathers force and fresh interest throughout.

PASS THE GOOD NEWS ON.

You Magnetites are never slow to recommend your favourite paper. That much is evident from the scores of letters I receive every week from new readers. Well, make it an extra-special recruiting week. Now is the time to convince a non-reader that he's missing the best boys' story paper in existence. There's Mr. Frank Richards right bang at the top of his form; there's young Dicky Nugent beating his own record, and now the new serial. "Jove! It's a real pleasure to be associated with the MAGNET," says a new reader in his letter to me to-day. And he is associated; you're all associated. You are all out to keep the MAGNET at the top of the tree. Splendid! This year of nineteen twenty-eight is going to be a record one, take it from me. And let me whisper it: I've some stunning wheezes and sur-

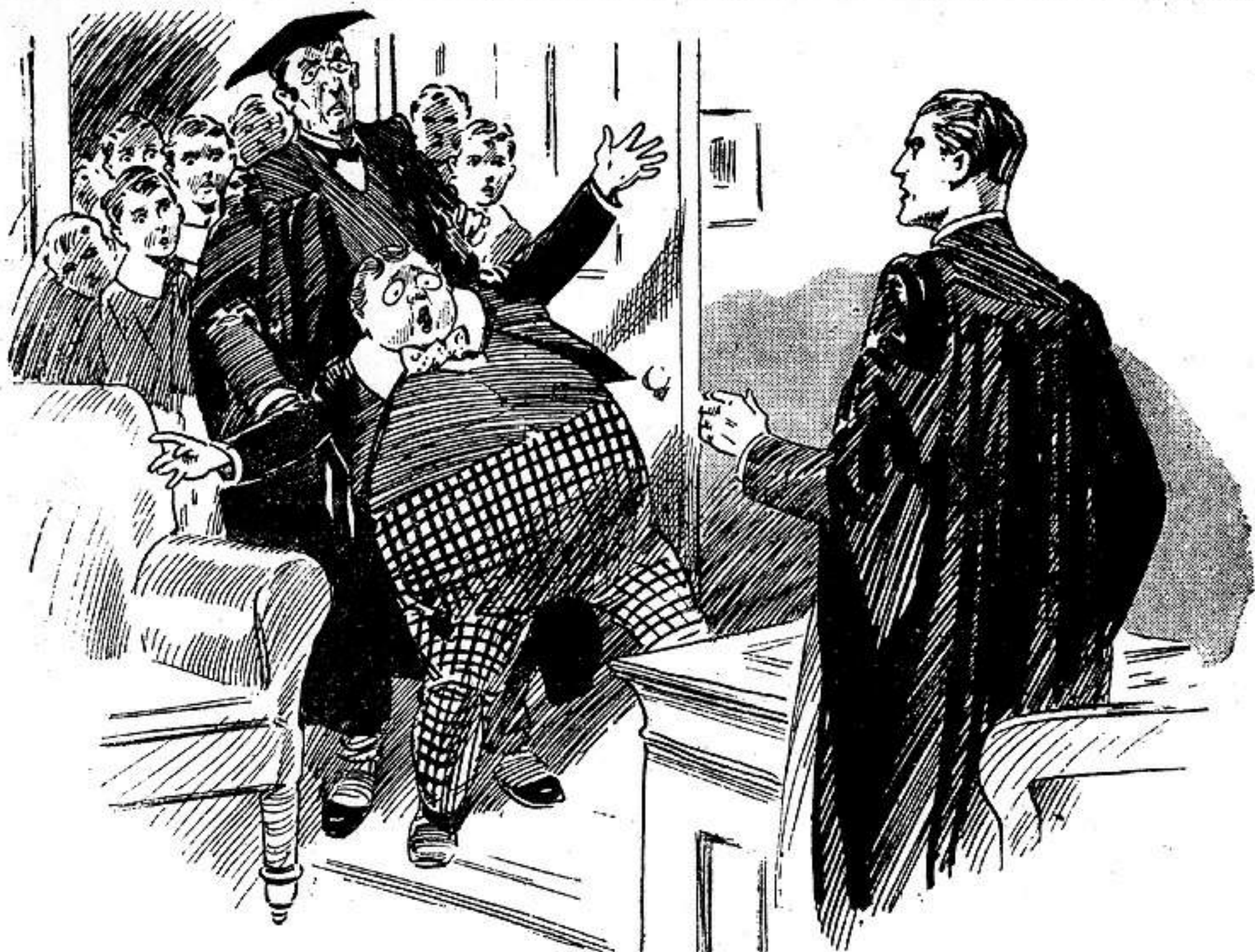
prises in store for you all. Are we all happy? Bet your sweet life. Then here's to nineteen twenty-eight!

WHY DON'T THEY IMPROVE?

A loyal reader, who lives in France, by the way, feels rather perplexed that Hurree Janset Ram Singh, or Inky, should still speak such peculiar "English." And my correspondent thinks it high time that Vernon-Smith's suspicious nature took a change for the better. Wait a moment. He also thinks that William George Bunter has committed so many petty follies that he would have been expelled from any other school but Greyfriars. In other words, this correspondent wants everybody changed into an ideal specimen of boyhood. That's a splendid idea in its way, but where would the MAGNET be without William George, the fatuous Removite? Where would it be without Inky as we now see him, and Vernon-Smith? And, most important of all, where would my correspondent be if these characters became entirely different. Would he derive much enjoyment from reading the MAGNET? I doubt it! After all, there's nothing really serious in Inky's humorous rendering of the English language. There's nothing too terrible in Vernon-Smith's suspicious nature. We all have our faults, and Smithy, after all, has heaps of splendid points about him. And Bunter! Well, Bunter's a joke. He must not be taken too seriously. But he's funny, isn't he? My hat, there would be a storm in MAGNET circles if Bunter got the bullet from Greyfriars for good. Don't you chaps agree?

YOUR EDITOR.

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Billy Bunter staggered back as his gaze fell upon the amazed face of Eric Gilmore. "That's him!" he gasped. "He's the convict—Convict 19, that I saw in the wood-cutter's hut!" (See Chapter 15.)

"Get up at once!"

Billy Bunter picked himself up. He blinked uneasily round the study through his big spectacles. Then, as his glance fell on the handsome face of Eric Gilmore, he gave a yell and made a jump for the door.

But the doorway was blocked now. Fellows crowded the doorway and the passage beyond, and there was no room for a fly to pass.

"Yaroooh! Lemme out!" yelled Bunter. "He's here! It's the convict! He's got a revolver! Help!"

"Bunter!" thundered Mr. Quelch.

"Yow-ow! Help!"

Mr. Quelch grasped the fat junior's shoulder and forcibly spun him back into the study.

"Bunter! Cannot you see that there is no one here but Mr. Gilmore? Or are you absolutely out of your senses?"

"It's him!" shrieked Bunter.

"Him! Who?" gasped Mr. Quelch.

Bunter, squirming behind the Remove master's angular form, pointed a fat forefinger at the amazed face of Eric Gilmore.

"That's him!" he gasped.

"Mr. Gilmore! That is Mr. Gilmore."

"I don't care!" howled Bunter. "I don't care what he calls himself! He's the convict!"

"Bunter!"

"He's the convict—Convict 19—that I saw in the woodcutter's hut, that stole my overcoat!" yelled Bunter. "It's him! I'd know him anywhere! That's the convict! Help!"

"Is that extraordinary boy alluding to me, Mr. Quelch?" exclaimed Eric Gilmore in a gasping voice.

"Apparently he is," said the astounded Remove master. "It would

appear that he sees some resemblance between you and the convict he unfortunately encountered in the holidays. No doubt his short sight is the cause; the foolish boy's sight is very defective. He is also very obtuse—the stupidest boy in my Form!"

"I should imagine so!" said Mr. Gilmore dryly.

"Bunter!" The Remove master was crimson now with mortification. "You stupid boy, listen to me! This gentleman is Mr. Gilmore, the new master of the Second Form—well known to your headmaster—who has come to Greyfriars with the very best recommendations, and is widely known and respected. If you see some real or fancied resemblance between him and the—the fugitive you saw in the holidays, it is merely a mistaken impression on your part. Do you understand me?"

"It's the convict, sir!"

"Goodness gracious! Do you dare to repeat that ridiculous statement?" exclaimed the exasperated Mr. Quelch. "I tell you this gentleman is well known to the Head!"

"The Head can't know that he's a convict, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"He is nothing of the kind, you incredibly stupid boy!" thundered the Remove master.

"Oh, yes, sir—Convict 19, sir! There's a reward of fifty pounds for him, sir! Hadn't you better telephone for the police, sir, before he gets away?" gasped Bunter.

The Remove master breathed hard and deep.

"Mr. Gilmore, I can only apologise for this conduct of a boy in my Form," he said. "I need not assure you that he will be adequately punished for his

absurdity and insolence. Come with me, Bunter!"

"I—I say, sir——"

"Silence!"

Bunter was led away. Mr. Gilmore, with a very flushed face, closed his door on the crowd in the passage.

The crowd broke up, discussing the amazing affair in breathless excitement. From Mr. Quelch's study came sounds of woe. The Remove master, deeply incensed by what he could only regard as obstinate insolence on the part of the fat junior, did not spare the rod.

When Billy Bunter limped back to the Remove passage it was obvious that he had been through it severely. The caning had not, perhaps, convinced William George Bunter that Mr. Gilmore, the master of the Second Form, was not Convict 19, the fugitive from Blackmoor Prison. But it had, at least, convinced him that the less he said about the matter the better.

Bunter was, indeed, beginning to wonder whether he had, after all, made a mistake.

Was the man who called himself Eric Gilmore, at Greyfriars, really the hunted convict he had seen lurking in the woodcutter's hut near Wharton Lodge? Was the new master of the Second Form in reality Convict 19, the desperate fugitive from Blackmoor, known to be still at large?

Only the future could tell.

THE END.

(Now look out for the topping sequel to this yarn, entitled: "CONVICT NINETEEN!" which will appear in next week's MAGNET. You'll enjoy every line of it, chums.)

The sky is black with bursting shells; shrapnel whizzes on all sides of the British plane and its gallant pilot. The anti-aircraft batteries suddenly cease and, out of the clouds, like unleashed demons of the sky, speed four of the hated Fokker planes, their guns belching fire and death to the intrepid airman who has dared so far over the German line!

The BULLDOG BREED

By
Geo. E. Rochester



THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Somewhere in France!

THE sun was setting in a blaze of golden glory and far across the parched and withered grass of Xaffavilliers Aerodrome stretched the dark shadows of the scattered canvas hangars of the 97th Bombing Squadron.

From five kilometres eastward, borne on the gentle evening breeze, came the eternal rumbling thunder of heavy gunfire.

"Jerry's putting up a strafe to-night!" said the adjutant, pausing, pen in hand, and inclining his head in a listening attitude.

The gunnery officer, lounging in the doorway of the small flight office, nodded. He was scanning the eastern sky with eyes which were vaguely troubled.

"I wish the squadron was back!" he growled. "What the dickens has sent them to Trier!"

The adjutant laid down his pen and lit a cigarette.

"It appears," he replied, thoughtfully watching a wisp of smoke curling lazily upwards, "that the Boche is concentrating troops at Trier! Ninety-nine squadron and one hundred and four squadron went over and dropped a pile of bombs on the railway junction this morning!"

"Good raid?" grunted the gunnery officer.

"Oh, very! They fell in with a crowd of Fokkers and kept up a running fight as far as the first anti-aircraft barrage! We lost six machines, but the Boche lost nearly twice as many!"

"Well, our boys will have given the blighters a dusting, if they've fallen in with them!" said the gunnery officer. "But they should have been back before now!"

He broke off, peering upwards. Above the rumble of the distant guns there had come to his practised ear a faint drone. High in the sky were five tiny specks flying westwards towards the sunset. As he watched, a white Verrey light floated downwards from the leading machine.

"How many machines went on the raid?" he asked gruffly, turning to the adjutant.

"Ten, wasn't it?"

"Yes, ten!"

"Then only five have come back! Half—half of 'em's missing!"

The adjutant joined him outside the hut and they waited in silence whilst the five D.H.4's dropped earthwards in wide spirals and, landing on the aerodrome, taxied in toward the hangars. Then, together, they walked towards the machines.

Pilots and observers were clambering stiffly from the cockpits, and mechanics were already beginning to overhaul engines, flying-wires, and controls.

A youth—he was little more than a boy—moved away from the machine which had landed first and came towards the adjutant. His unbuttoned flying-coat afforded a glimpse of pilot's wings and the ribbon of the Military Cross on the left breast of his tunic.

"Back then, Milvain?" greeted the adjutant.

"What was it?" cut in the gunnery officer. "Fokkers or anti-aircraft?"

"Both!" replied Captain Eric Milvain. "We met twenty Fokkers south of Saarbrücken, messing about at fifteen thousand feet. There wasn't a dud pilot among 'em! Howard, Johnson, and Moncrieff were shot down before we reached the first barrage. The Fokkers sheered off then. We lost Stuart right over Trier. An archie battery got a bullseye on him. We got rid of our bombs on the railway, and when we emerged from the final barrage we ran into the Fokkers again. The blighters were waiting for us. We fought a running fight as far as the line. Gibson went down in flames, poor devil!"

"Near the line, the Fokkers dived under cover of their own guns. Well, I'd better be pushing along. I've got my report to write out."

"Wait a minute!" growled the gunnery officer. "How many of the Huns did we get?"

"Somewhere in the neighbourhood of fifteen," replied Eric. "We've got to check those figures, but that's about it."

He moved off, a hint of weariness in his gait. The adjutant watched him go, an appraising look in his grave, gay eyes.

"About the best pilot we've got!" he murmured.

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Guns.

"And one of the best of fellows!"

"I'm with you entirely!"

The adjutant sighed.

"Yet it'll be his turn some day, old man," he said. "You can't always keep coming back from over there."

He jerked a hand vaguely towards the east.

Into the Dawn!

TWO hours later Captain Eric Milvain turned in. Scarcely had his head touched the pillow of his camp bed than he was sound asleep.

It seemed but minutes later when he awoke with a start. The first grey light of the coming dawn was creeping in through the window of his hut. Standing by the bed, prodding him gently, was the adjutant.

"Stop it, fathead!" protested Eric. "Stop it, and run away!"

He turned over and thumped the pillow with his head.

"Get up!" remarked the adjutant.

"You're a confounded nuisance! What do you want?"

"Personally, nothing. The C.O. wants you."

Eric groaned; then, throwing back the blankets, swung his feet to the floor.

"Can I go in my pyjamas?" he inquired.

"No, you jolly well can't! It's a stunt. The mechanics are already getting your bus out on to the tarmac."

"Oh!" Eric proceeded to divest himself of his pyjamas and scramble into his clothes. "I hope," he went on lugubriously, "that you're not responsible for this. I mean, I haven't forgotten how you once proposed that I should beetle off and do some artillery observations at five hundred feet above the Boche guns. It's men like you who make this war what it is!"

The adjutant grinned.

"You made a life-long friend of that French battery commander," he replied. "After you'd given him his range, and he'd blown Jerry's new gun

emplacements sky-high, didn't he come along here and wring your hands and kiss you on both cheeks?"

"Yes, he did," replied Eric. "And that's just why I don't like you. Dash it, that was the most ghastly thing which has ever happened to me in France!"

"Yes, I suppose it was pretty foul," admitted the adjutant. "Never mind, you've got a nice little joy ride in front of you this morning!"

"Oh, where to?"

"Trier!"

Eric paused in the act of struggling into his tunic.

"But, dash it, I've just come back from there!" he protested. "Practically came home with the milk!"

"Well, you're going back. The ninety-first squadron—they're Handley-Page night-bombers, you know—were over there in the small hours, and you've got to photograph the damage. The C.O. will give you full particulars. I believe four machines went over, and each of 'em dropped sixteen 112 lb. bombs. I should say, at a guess, that

EXTRACT FROM THE ACTUAL REPORT OF GENERAL VON TULZ, THE COMMANDANTE OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR CAMP AT PILLAU-BEI-KAMPSTIGALL, AND DATED NOVEMBER 7th, 1916.

"... with reference to the escape, yesterday, of the three English prisoners of war, I reiterate that the guards and personnel of the camp are above suspicion. They, like myself, are completely mystified and can throw no light on the means by which the three men were literally spirited out of the camp! A thorough search, rigorous questioning, and the fullest investigation, have afforded not the slightest clue as to how, and at what hour, the escaped prisoners left the camp.

"I am tempted to ask myself if the escape can have been organised and carried out by prisoners in the camp who are in communication with traitors to the Fatherland outside the barbed wire. But a moment's reflection proves the utter absurdity of such a theory..."

Trier must be one of the most unhealthy spots in Deutschland just now!"

"The only thing I've got against these night-bombing merchants," commented Eric, "is that they drop their pills in the dark, and some blighter's got to tootle off at dawn and return with a camera full of plates to indicate the damage. Well, I'm ready. Come on!"

Eric's interview with the grizzle-haired commanding officer was brief. It was as the adjutant had said. The ninety-first squadron from Ouchy had bombed Trier, and aerial photographs were required.

"Get off as soon as you can," said the C.O. "Good-bye, boy, and good luck!"

Eric saluted smartly and withdrew. He popped into the mess, to grab a couple of sandwiches and a cup of steaming coffee. Carstairs was there, big and beefy, his helmet and goggles in one hand and a cup of coffee in the other. He was Eric's observer, and a man of few words.

"Morning!" he grunted.

"Same to you, old man!"

A minute later they quitted the mess and walked briskly towards the hangars. The doors of one stood open, and outside it was Eric's D.H. 4 machine, the engine running on a subdued note, and the propeller ticking over.

"Is she all right?" he asked the sergeant mechanic.

"Yes, sir."

"Giving her revolutions?"

"Yes, sir. She's fine!"

Eric nodded, and swung himself up into the forward cockpit. Whilst Carstairs busied himself with the large boxlike camera which was fitted in the floor of the rear cockpit, Eric ran the engine up. Then, throttling down, he turned to Carstairs.

"Ready?" he shouted, to make himself heard above the engine.

Carstairs jerked his head in assent, and commenced to fit an ammunition drum on the Lewis gun. Eric opened the throttle, and the roar of the engine deepened into a pulsating note. He adjusted his goggles and gripped the control stick with a gloved hand. Then his other hand shot up, and the waiting mechanic whipped away the chocks from in front of the tired wheels of the under-carriage.

The machine lumbered out to the middle of the aerodrome, then swung into wind. Eric's hand closed on the throttle, and the engine roared thunderingly. With increasing impetus, the machine shot forward, and, as Eric pulled steadily on the control, it rose into the air in a long upward glide.

Shrapnel!

ERIC climbed steadily, and, at twelve thousand feet, swung the D.H. 4 towards the line. The morning was grey, but the cloud-bank high, and he judged that visibility would be tolerably good up to fifteen thousand feet.

To the south lay Rambervilliers, the French headquarters; and to the north the strongly guarded and prohibited area of Nancy, over which even Allied machines were forbidden to fly.

Three kite balloons were lazily ascending as the D.H. 4 passed over the trenches at thirteen thousand feet. Peering downwards, Eric saw winding columns, snake-like from that altitude, moving slowly towards a twisting line fringed by riven and shell-ploughed ground. Here and there floated irregular puffs of smoke, token of heavy batteries in action. His eye was caught by three tiny smudges of grey creeping over the stark and barren remnants of what had once been smiling meadow land. Tanks, those, moving forward to position.

They passed from view, and he was over the enemy lines. Far below him wheeled two British R.E. 8's, carrying out artillery observations for the British and French batteries. Around them floated puffs of smoke like little balls of cotton-wool, and Eric knew that the ranging of the batteries was being carried out under heavy fire from the German anti-aircraft guns.

Those, too, dropped behind, and, still climbing, he kept steadily on towards the east-north-east. He noted signs of great activity below. Grey, winding columns of marching men, looking like so many ants, were moving forward along the thin ribbons of roadways. Here and there were slow-moving lorries and heavy, tractor-drawn guns. Well, all that would be duly reported.

by the observation machines. Eric's job lay farther on, at Trier, where German troops were being concentrated preparatory to throwing them into the line.

He crouched farther down in his seat and his eyes scanned the sky ahead, for he was by now well over hostile country. In the rear cockpit Carstairs lounged against the gun-mounting, his steady eyes alert and watchful. Southwards lay the wooded slopes of the Vosges mountains, swathed in the mists of early morning.

A wisp of wraith-like cloud drifted past the lower plane. Then dense, swirling clouds enveloped the machine, and Carstairs relaxed, for they were now in the cloud belt. On and on through that grey, impenetrable mist roared the D.H. 4. The engine was thundering in perfect, pulsating rhythm, and the altimeter indicator was flickering at eighteen thousand feet. But the cold was intense, and seemed to strike through to the very bones. Then, without warning, the machine ran out of the clouds into blue sky and brilliant sunshine.

Eric's eyes became grim, and he scanned the sky ahead and around him in search of enemy machines. Carstairs straightened up with a jerk, and, grasping the spade-grip of his gun, tested the efficiency of the well-oiled mounting.

Twenty minutes more and they would be over Trier. Without warning, a puff of white smoke sprang into being two hundred feet or more from the left plane. Then another and another.

"Shrapnel!" grunted Carstairs.

Above the roar of the engine sounded a sharp, whip-like crack, and, simultaneously with bursting smoke, something whined past Carstairs' head. It was a piece of flying shrapnel.

"Phew!"

The beefy observer conjured up a grin. Eric's hand was on the throttle, and the propeller was thrashing the air at full revolutions. Then he shoved forward the control and went earthwards in a long, tearing dive. At sixteen thousand feet he pulled on the control and flattened out. One anti-aircraft battery was passed.

Ahead, stretching far across the sky, more puffs of smoke sprang into being. A veritable curtain of fire, this; the first of the barrages guarding Trier. Again Eric's hand tightened on the throttle, and his feet moved tentatively on the rudder control. The barrage was very near now. He whipped forward the control and kicked on the rudder-bar.

The D.H. 4 went downwards with a sickening swoop. Around it burst the shrapnel from the German guns. Eric glanced to the right. A flying-wire was streaming outwards in the slip-stream of the racing propeller, cut by a piece of flying metal. But the machine was through and roaring on towards Trier, which by now lay but a few miles ahead.

Eric turned his head and, as Carstairs leaned forward, shouted:

"I'm going down now—shall flatten out at ten thousand feet!"

Carstairs nodded, and, crouching down in his cockpit, commenced to fumble with the aerial camera. Like a silver streak the D.H. 4 roared earthwards in a tearing nose-dive. All around it burst the vicious shrapnel of the German batteries below.

Once the machine jarred and swung to the left. Eric had it under control

again in a moment, but there was a gaping rent in the left lower plane.

At ten thousand feet he flattened out over Trier. Peering downwards, he sighted the railway station, its glass roofs glinting in the morning sun. Pressing on the rudder, he pushed the control diagonally forward and banked towards it.

Carstairs should be ready now. Eric cast a quick glance over his shoulder. Then he turned quickly in his seat again. His eyes were grim, and his lips drawn into a thin line. For Carstairs was lying sprawled across the gun-mounting, his helmet torn and soaked with blood.

Over Trier!

ERIC banked, and as he did so something gleamed silver in the sky above him. Four Fokkers were roaring down on him, their synchronised guns aflame.

The anti-aircraft guns were stilled, for there was danger of hitting their own machines. Opening the throttle to its fullest extent, Eric dived, then, pulling hard on the control, he brought the D.H. 4 up in a zoom. Flattening out, he banked, and as he did so the leading Fokker tore past him, the gunner in its rear cockpit pumping bullets from a Krupp's gun.

Eric kicked hard on the rudder and shoved forward the control. With a jar which severely tested the well-set struts, the D.H. 4 banked wildly and went roaring earthwards in the wake of the Fokker.

Eric's hand closed on the trigger of his synchronised Vicker's gun. Above the thunder of his engine he heard the vicious rat-tat-tat as the ammunition belt whirled into action. Blood-red flame-licked back from the gun-muzzle.

In the rear cockpit of the Fokker the German gunner slumped forward and slid from view, his gun swinging wildly on its mounting. Eric grinned mirthlessly. He knew his every bullet was whanging into the vitals of that machine. He could see the head and shoulders of the pilot as the man crouched forward in his seat.

A jet of flame leapt to life in the forward cockpit of the Fokker. At the same instant Eric yanked hard on the control-stick of his machine and released the pressure on the trigger of the gun. The D.H. 4 zoomed upwards, hung for an instant, then, as Eric whipped the control-stick sideways and kicked on full rudder, it rolled on to an even keel.

Eric had a glimpse of the Fokker plunging earthwards, enveloped in blood-red flame and clouds of black, eddying smoke. Then the remaining three were on him.

Turning, diving, twisting, Eric fought grimly to avoid the streams of bullets which were coming at him from forward and rear cockpits of the Fokkers. One machine dived and zoomed up beneath him. A burst of bullets from its synchronised gun tore through the floor of his cockpit. He dived, kicking on rudder, and again his synchronised gun roared into life.

It raked that Fokker from engine cowl to rear gun-mounting. The pilot swayed forward over his controls, the noise of the engine died suddenly away, and the machine spun earthwards!

That was two accounted for. But one of the remaining Fokkers had

manœuvred till it was above the tail of the D.H. 4. Ah, for Carstairs, then, to have warded off that attack from the rear. The Fokker dived, its synchronised gun ablaze. Something scared Eric's head like a red-hot iron. The dashboard in front of him was riven as though by an invisible axe. Instinctively he shoved the controls into neutral, fighting to ward off the deathly waves of sickness and nausea which threatened to engulf him.

The D.H. 4 went into a spin, and the two Fokkers closed in on it to finish off the lone Englishman. But the rush of air served to drive the mists from Eric's brain. At five thousand feet he gripped the control-stick, jerked open the throttle, and, kicking on the rudder, wheeled on the nearest Fokker.

The pilot, obviously taken completely by surprise, banked wildly. The black Iron Crosses painted on the bottom of his lower plane showed vividly. The gunner in the rear cockpit was firing with a wildness which bordered almost on panic.

But Eric kept straight on, so straight that it seemed as though he must crash into that ill-fated Fokker. His hand was pressed tightly on the trigger of the Vicker's gun, and he knew the range was too short to allow of a miss.

The Fokker pilot pulled hard on his control-stick. His face was grey and ashen, his lips drawn back in a snarl. The nose of the Fokker rose. For a second its racing propeller thrashed the air, then, as the pilot collapsed in his seat, the nose dropped and the machine hurtled earthwards, with engine full on and the unconscious pilot lying on the floor of the cockpit.

Eric zoomed up and flattened out. There was still another enemy machine to be dealt with. Then he laughed grimly, for the fourth machine was far below, making towards the ground. Whether the pilot had funkled it, or whether he had developed engine trouble, Eric neither knew nor cared.

He pressed on the rudder and swung the nose of the machine towards the west—and France. The shrapnel was coming up again now. The machine was already riddled like a sieve, and more than once it lurched ominously.

But Eric held steadily onwards, fighting desperately to keep at bay the recurring waves of nausea which were flooding over him as reaction strove for the upper hand.

His face was wet and sticky where the blood had oozed from a scalp wound.

Bang, bang!

Eric stiffened in his seat. The worst had happened. His engine was misfiring.

The German Peasant!

ERIC'S brain worked rapidly. He greatly doubted if he could make the trenches. Apart from engine trouble, the swaying, lurching D.H. 4 was almost crippled. The rudder controls, torn by the burst of bullets which had come through the bottom of the cockpit, were hanging by a strand.

Between Strasbourg and Buhl, Eric knew was a stretch of desolate moorland. If he could reach it and land there might be time to make a hasty repair and take off again. Better risk that than almost certain capture by making a forced landing in populated country. He might also be able to do



Crack! Crack! Two shots rang out, and a bullet whined by Eric's head. Birchington staggered forward a step and crumpled up. In the distance, topping a rise in the moorlands, was a party of grey-clad German soldiers running towards them. (See this page.)

something for Carstairs. But, no. He knew Carstairs was dead. Poor old Carstairs!

He swung the machine towards the south-west, his engine banging and running uncertainly. He was very low—too low for safety. He came through the barrages, sitting stiffly erect in the pilot's seat, hoping against hope that his engine would hold out. His head was aching intolerably, but he knew how fatal it would be to relax his tensed nerves.

Once he turned his head. Far away to the east he saw a blurred smudge and the sunlight glinting on a silver spire. Strasbourg, that. Ahead lay the wooded slopes of the Vosges. He was passing now over bleak and barren country, and when Strasbourg had faded from his vision he shoved forward the control-stick and commenced to descend. Save for distant scattered hamlets there was no sign of human habitation.

At eighty feet Eric switched off his engine. It expired with a dying gasp, which augured ill for its ever being restarted, without having first undergone a thorough overhaul. He made a bumpy, shaky landing on the rough ground near a thick clump of stunted bushes.

Drawing his automatic from his belt, he rose stiffly in his seat, and leaning over the rear of the cockpit spoke Carstairs' name. But there was no answer from the huddled figure on the floor of the gunner's cockpit.

His automatic still in his hand, Eric clambered from the machine and dropped to the ground. It needed little investigation to find that Carstairs had been killed by a chunk of flying shrapnel.

Eric looked about him searchingly. All was quiet and nothing stirred. His

automatic ready for instant use, he mounted to the engine, then turned his attention to the petrol tank.

Within a minute he was standing on the ground again, his eyes grim. For the petrol tank was almost empty. It had been punctured by either a bullet or a piece of shrapnel.

Well, that settled it, of course. He'd get the body of Carstairs out, set the old bus on fire, and beetle off. He'd get through somehow. Lie up during the day and travel at night. There wasn't enough petrol left to take the machine a dozen miles.

He turned towards the rear cockpit, then a sharp ejaculation sprang to his lips, and he whipped his automatic to the ready. Running towards him from the clump of bushes was a German peasant, dressed in a blouse and coarse, baggy trousers.

Waiting till the man was within ten yards of him, Eric snapped:

"Another step and you're a dead man!"

He spoke in German, for he was an excellent linguist.

The peasant halted abruptly.

"Oh, don't be a silly fool!" he broke out. "I want a lift!"

"Eh? What?"

The total unexpectedness of the reply had taken Eric aback, for the man had spoken in perfect English.

"Come on," went on the peasant, "let's get the bus tinkered up. You've had a forced landing, and I'm glad you have. You'll have to buck up, though. There's a Boche archie battery three miles from here, and you can bet they'll be heading this way for all they're worth!"

"But who the dickens are you, man?"

"I'm Birchington, of the Secret Service! Here, look at this!"

And, stepping forward, the peasant

thrust the thin metal identity disc of the British Secret Service towards Eric.

"I must get through to headquarters as soon as possible!" went on Birchington quickly. "This is a godsend to me. You can tootle me over the lines in no time!"

"I can't, man!" replied Eric regretfully. "There's hardly any petrol in the tank, and the engine's conked!"

Birchington groaned.

"Oh, confound it!" he said. "I'll have to hoof it after all! But what about you? You'd better make for the Swiss frontier, and—"

Crack, crack!

Two shots rang out. A bullet whined by Eric's head. Birchington clutched at the breast of his peasant's blouse. He staggered forward a step, then crumpled and sprawled heavily to the ground.

It had happened within an instant. Eric wheeled round. Topping a rise in the moorland and running towards them was a party of grey-clad soldiers.

"Quick!" Birchington's voice came hoarsely, urgently. "Get me—to the bushes—something to say—"

Eric whipped his automatic into the pocket of his flying coat, and, picking up the Secret Service man, slung him over his shoulder and ran for the bushes.

Crack, crack!

Two more shots rang out, and the bullets whistled perilously close. But Eric reached the clump of bushes, and, plunging into the midst of them, dropped on his knees and laid Birchington on the ground.

"Inside my shirt—quick—the packet!" said Birchington jerkily.

Eric tore open the man's shirt and blouse. In a pocket on the inner side of the coarse shirt he found an envelope.

"Got it—good man—bury it! Quick!"

And whilst Eric scooped a hole in the ground, tearing with nails and

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(Continued from previous page.)

fingers. Birchington's voice came huskily.

"They're plans of—huge aircraft factory—near Frankfurt—surrender yourself—understand, surrender yourself—it'll be the prison camps for you. Escape committee—tell them—they'll get you out, then come for plans!"

"Yes, yes, I understand!" Eric's voice was rapid, for he could hear excited guttural shouts approaching. "The Escape Committee, what are they?"

But Birchington did not explain.

"Escape—come for plans—get through to headquarters with them—urgent, man, urgent!"

He broke off, gasping for breath. Then he raised himself on his elbow. The approaching men were very close now.

"Don't fail me—promise—your word of honour—" Birchington's voice was stronger, and he groped outwards with his hand.

Eric took it in a firm clasp.

"I will not fail you," he said. "On my honour!"

"Good man! Oh, good man—"

Birchington's voice trailed away. A trickle of blood stained his lips, and, as he fell limply back, the foremost of the German soldiers crashed into the clump of bushes!

Eric knew that resistance was worse than useless. Rough hands seized him and a bayonet was thrust within an inch of his chest. A sergeant, square-jawed, brutish, and wearing the cap button of the army of Prince Ruprecht of Bavaria, pushed himself forward.

"Search the schweinhund for weapons!" he barked.

A rapid, but thorough, search brought to light Eric's revolver which the sergeant pocketed.

"Englisch—" he grunted. "But, yes, I said so—Now listen to me, you dog of an Englishman. Who is that man?"

He indicated the prone, still form of Birchington. Eric had been expecting this, but he knew that it was absolutely essential that he forswore all knowledge of the secret service man.

"How the dickens do I know who he is?" he snapped.

The sergeant flushed a dull red, and an ugly look crept into his cold blue eyes.

"Have a care, my friend!" he warned harshly. "Such insolence can be cured. If you do not know this man why did you carry him to the bushes?"

Eric shrugged his shoulders.

"I refuse to answer any questions of yours!" he replied.

With an oath the sergeant stepped forward and gripped the boy by the shoulder.

He wheeled on the nearest German soldier.

"Search that pig!" he snapped. "Maybe he carries his papers of identification!"

The soldier bent over Birchington and from the pocket in the torn blouse of the dead man he drew a dirty and torn grey envelope.

The sergeant snatched it and examined the contents.

"They are his papers!" he grunted.

"He is of Alsace—Johann Villiers—a peasant! Huh, exempt from service with the colours through lung trouble! Stamped by the tribunals of Strasbourg, Munich and Karlsruhe! A dog with the cursed blood of the Franzose in him—"

He paused, and shot a quick glance at Eric.

"French blood, my Englishman! Maybe he wished to aid you. Himmel, but there are many who hate the Fatherland among the treacherous dogs of Alsace—"

There came to Eric some realisation of what the sergeant meant. Many of the peasants of Alsace-Lorraine were of French extraction. But since the Franco-Prussian war they had lived under German rule. Yet in their hearts was an abiding love for France.

"You will not deny that the dog offered you aid!" went on the sergeant harshly. "I know his breed. He is one of those who would have slipped across the frontier on the eve of war and joined the army of the Franzose. But we closed the frontiers—pouf!"—and he snapped his fingers in the boy's face—as quick as that! He wished to help you, yes?"

Eric saw his cue and was silent, and in that silence the German sergeant read his affirmative.

(Isn't this story the goods, boys? What-ho! And it's more thrilling than ever next week. See that you get your MAGNET before the newsagent sells out his stock; in other words, give him your order to-day.)

FAMOUS FOOTBALL CLUBS!

(Continued from page 2.)

Percy Barton, a stalwart half for a long time, and later a fine full-back, has played for England, and so has Joe Bradford, the centre-forward. Bradford is a very real centre-forward, with a cheery disposition. He smiles through failure as in success, and is what Birmingham calls a "nice lad." Many clubs have made offers for him, but he has remained at St. Andrews.

One of the conundrums of the team is James Crosbie, a Scot who has played for his country, and who cost a big sum of money. A really great footballer, with skill in every sinew, but somehow or other he has never been much among the goal-scorers. You can be too modest in front of goal, and that is what the regular attenders think about Crosbie.

Criticism of the same sort cannot be levelled against George Briggs, who has often changed places with Bradford. A stocky little fellow of five-feet-five, Briggs is as hard as nails and as strong as a horse. In addition, we might add that he can kick like a mule when the ball is at his toe anywhere near to goal. He does it, too, in no half-hearted fashion.

William Harris is an inside-left of whom great things are expected. He was seen some little time ago playing for England in a junior International match against Scotland, and so impressed that he was signed on forthwith. As a partner on the left wing there is Johnson, who, although he went to Barnsley to play football for a time, is a Midlander through and through.

When these regulars cannot take their places, there are promising youngsters in the background in Bond, Oaks, Hibbs, and Bruce, while the side was recently strengthened by the acquisition of Randle, a half-back from Coventry, and Stanley Davies, the Welsh International from West Bromwich.

This last-mentioned player is one of the most remarkable personalities in football. Anyway, he has had a strange career. On many occasions he has not been in the original Welsh side to play in an International match, but time after time he has been called upon to take the place of a man who has been compelled to drop out. Davies has played for Wales in every department, even having kept goal when the goalkeeper was hurt. And he has never let Wales down. Birmingham first put him at half-back, but he is most useful as a forward.

The club has never had the Villa reputation for being an ultra-scientific side, but they have always played what can best be described as "down-right" football.



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14-1-28



Oh Price On His Head!

A DRAMATIC STORY OF THE HEROES OF ST. SAM'S.

DICKY MUGGLETON.

JACK JOLLY of the Fourth, jumped out of the night-train as it slowed up at Muggleton station. He turned a double somersault on the platform, and finally landed in the arms of his chums—Merry and Bright and Frank Fearless—who had come to meet him. They embraced him like a long-lost brother, though Jack had only been away from St. Sam's a couple of days. He had been to London, to attend the reading of his great-grandmother's will.

Jack was one of the heroes to the old lady's fortune, and he had told his chums that he would return to St. Sam's rolling in riches. Perhaps that was why they made such an awful fuss of him, as he tumbled into their arms.

"Good old Jack!" said Merry. "It's a treat to see you smiling chivalry again."

"Yes, rather!" said Bright. "We've missed you dreadfully, old fellow. In fact, we've all been off our feed since you went away."

"And we've had sleepless nights," chimed in Frank Fearless. "When, after a discreet pause, he added:

"Have you come back a giddy millionaire, Jack?"

Jack Jolly grinned. "Not exactly," he said. "But I'm five pounds richer than when I went away; and we'll blue it at the tuckshop when we get back to St. Sam's."

"Five pounds isn't much," said Merry, his face falling.

"Well, I'm satisfied, anyway. Under the terms of my great-grandmother's will, I was entitled to five thousand pounds on my coming-of-age, or five pounds down, which ever I preferred. Natchurally I chose the five pounds down. A five in the hand is worth five thousand in the bush."

"Something in that," said Bright. "Anything might happen to you before you come of age. How can any fellow be certain that he will reach the ripe old age of twenty-one? He might be knocked down by a motor-car."

"Or held up by a highwayman, and have his brains blown out," said Frank Fearless, with a sinister significance in his tone, as they proceeded to St. Sam's.

It was a wild and stormy night, and blowing grate guns; but our heroes were not "windy." They feared no foe in shining armor. Licking their arms, they stepped fearlessly through the night.

Talking about highwaymen, said Jack Jolly, "that was an awfully queer affair the other night, when four of our masters were held up at the cross-roads by an armed highwayman, and made to turn out their pockets."

"Awfully queer!" agreed Merry. "Wonder if it really happened, or if the masters imagined the whole thing?"

"Personally," said Bright, "I'm inclined to think that the masters were telling the tale. Highwaymen don't eggast, those days; they belong to the dim and distant past. Motor-cars, and modern progress, have driven 'em off the roads."

"True enough," said Frank Fearless. "There are no Dick Turpins, or Sixteen-stringed Jacks, nowadays. And yet it's strange that four masters should all be suffering from the same delusion that they were held up and robbed by a highwayman, on returning from the cinema in Muggleton. Old Lickham declared that he was robbed of his life-savings—half-a-crown. And Mr. Tyeer's eighteen-carrot gold watch was taken; and Herr Guggenheimer had to hand over a string of German ossidages, at the point of the pistol. It's queer, jolly queer!"

The juniors became silent and thoughtful as they tramped along the dusty road. Presently they came to the cross-roads—the scene of the alleged hold-up—and

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in spite of them—solves they shivered a little. For this was a bleak and lonely spot, and the wind was moaning eerily.

There was a sign-post at the cross-roads; and on the sign-post—just below the spot where it said, "Stick No Bells," appeared the following notice:

FIFTY POUNDS REWARD!

"WHEREAS a certain desperit skoundrel, dressed in the gait of a highwayman, and calling himself DEADSHOT DICK, has lately been guilty of robbery with violence on the King's Highway, near this place:

"And whereas the afore-mentioned ruffian has made himself a menace to all law-abiding citizens, so that even the local policeman is afraid to venture out after dark:

"And whereas this sort of thing can not be allowed to go on in a civilized country, putting the wind up the populace,

A REWARD OF FIFTY POUNDS is hereby offered for the Body (Alive or Dead) of the afore-mentioned DEADSHOT DICK, if captured and delivered up to the nearest police-station.

"Here is a chance for some gallant hero to prove his metal!"

"Then it's true!" exclaimed Jack Jolly. "Deadshot Dick isn't a fictitious person; he's actually alive and kicking. And there's a reward of fifty quids for the person who captures him—alive or dead!"

"I only wish we could have the luck to collar the preshins skoundrel!" cried Merry.

They're offering £50 Reward for Deadshot Dick, dead or alive. But that doesn't seem to worry the Terror of the Highway. He pops up again, large as life, but his hand would scarcely buy a tinopenny stamp!

"You've forgotten to take the ticket off your three-cornered hat!" "Grate Scott!" gasped the highwayman. And he snatched off his hat, revealing a totally bald pate. Then he hastily tore off the price ticket and jammed his hat on again.

"You misunderstood me," he said. "By a price on my head I meant that a reward was being offered for my capture dead or alive! Well, we have not the slightest intention of being captured just yet, have we, Black Boss?"

And the speaker paraded the main of the lefty cart-horse on which he was mounted.

"What do you want with us?" demanded Frank Fearless boldly. "We've got no money—"

"Don't tell whoppers!" said Deadshot Dick sternly. "Which of you happens to have a large sum in your possession. You will now submit to a search—and no treachery with this blunderbuss—hence my nickname!"

So saying, Deadshot Dick dismounted from his horse and started to go through Jack Jolly's pockets.

about your grate-gr and mother, Jack?"

"Ask me an other!" said Jack Jolly. "I say! Wouldn't it be ripping if we could capture Deadshot Dick, and hand him over to justice?"

"Why hand him over to justice?" asked Merry. "Why not to the Head, or Mr. Lickham?"

"Ass! I don't mean Mr. Justice, the St. Sam's Town master. I mean Miss Justice—the girl with the bandaged eyes and the pair of scales. If only we could capture Deadshot Dick, and give him into custody, we should win the fifty pounds reward, and whack out the mummy between us."

"Yes, rather!" said Frank Fearless. "Supposing we lie in wait for the skoundrel to-morrow night? He's sure to be hanging around the cross-roads, up to his dusterly tix. We'll get a whole gang of fellows to help us, and we'll arm ourselves with pistols, and cricket-stumps, and Indian clubs. Then we'll capture him, and truss him up, and take him along to the police station, and claim the dibbs."

"That's the idea!" exclaimed Jack Jolly, his eyes gleaming. And the juniors tramped on to St. Sam's, eagerly discussing ways and means of putting a rope round the rascally neck of Deadshot Dick, the Terror of the Highway.

There was very little sleep for our heroes that night; and they were so eggasted next day that they were unable to sleep during morning lessons, as usual. Neither did they sleep a wink during the afternoon school. They were impatient for night to fall, so that they could put their plans into execution.

Night fell at last, and a cloak of darkness descended upon St. Sam's.

Suddenly a score of fellows emerged from the School House, and went marching down to the gates. They were armed with a variety of weapons—pokers, and cricket-stumps, and bats, and Indian clubs, and notched cudgels.

Jack Jolly had already instructed them in the art of capturing a highwayman; and their faces were taught and tense. They were fairly on the warpath, and not even the thought of Deadshot Dick's blunderbuss could turn them from their purpose.

"Don't be absurd, Jolly!" he egg-claimed. "There is no such person as Deadshot Dick! We are not living in the good old days, when the highways were infested by rogues and robbers. This is the Twentieth Century!"

"But we've actually seen Deadshot Dick, sir!" cried Frank Fearless. "Last night, on our way back from Muggleton, he held us up at the cross-roads."

"He held you up?" said the Head, incredulously. "Then he must be a wight-lifter—not a highwayman!"

"I mean, he waylaid us, sir, and went through our pockets. He is a skoundrel of the deepest dye, and there's a reward of fifty pounds being offered for his capture, dead or alive."

Doctor Birchmell frowned. "I don't believe a word of it!" he snapped. "The masters tried to tell me the same cock-and-bull story, but it's all tommy-rot! I will not allow this ridiculous egggestion. I will put my foot down on it with a firm hand. Go back at once, all of you! About turn! Quick march!"

Very reluctantly, the band of juniors marched back to the building. It was a frightful luck that their plans should be nipped in the bud by Doctor Birchmell; but, of course, the Head's word was law.

No sooner had the juniors disappeared into the building, than another party came marching down to the gates. This time it was a party of masters, armed to the teeth. It seemed that they had raided the school museum, and helped themselves to some of the old-fashioned weapons. Mr. Lickham carried a pike; Mr. Justice had a crossbow and a quiverful of arrows; Herr Guggenheimer swung a glittering sword over his head; and Mr. Chas. Tyeer wielded a heavy stone cudgel, with knobs on.

The little band of masters marched grimly down to the gates, when suddenly the Head's voice hailed them from the shadows.

"Good-evening, gentlemen! Whither bound, might I ask?"

The masters halted, shifting their feet and laying down their arms.

"We are going to the cross-roads, sir," said Mr. Lickham, "to lie in ambush for Deadshot Dick. We hope to capture that impudent skoundrel, and hand him over to justice."

Doctor Birchmell sneered. "Well, I wish you luck!" he said scornfully. "It's the fifty pounds reward that you're after, I suppose? You always were an awfully bounder, Lickham. But I somehow think you find Deadshot Dick too elusive for you, gentlemen! He will not be such a booby as to walk into your clumsy ambush. If you take my advice, you will return those murderous-looking weapons to the museum, and buzz off to bed!"

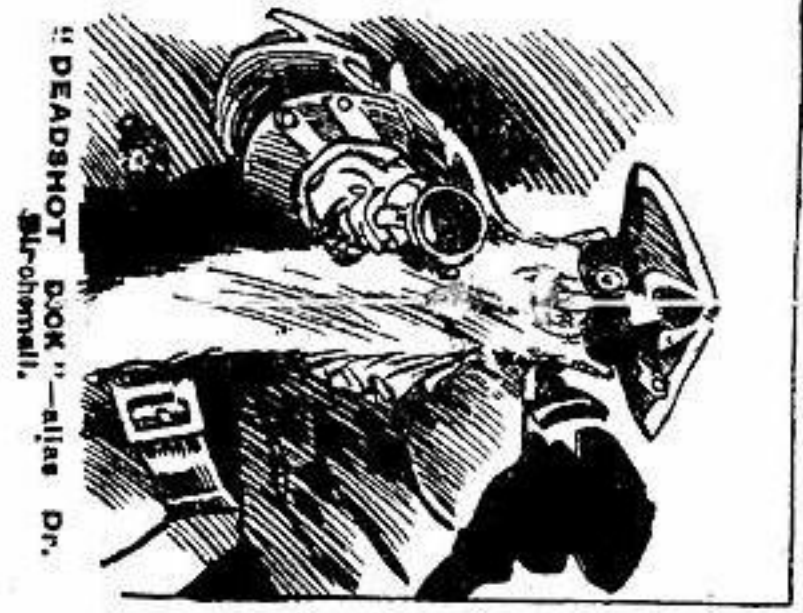
The masters did not take the Head's advice. They picked up their arms and marched out of the gates, confident of their ability to lay Deadshot Dick by the heels. But they were unlucky. They ambushed themselves near the cross-roads, and watched vigilantly till long after midnight. But Deadshot Dick never came near. And at last, feeling cold and cramped in every limb, the masters gave it up, and tramped moccily back to St. Sam's.

Doctor Birchmell was right, after all. Deadshot Dick, the Terror of the Highway, had proved too elusive a customer for the masters of St. Sam's. And the desperit skoundrel was still at large, with a price on his head!

THE END.

(There will be another exciting fine story of Jack Jolly and Co. in next week's MAGNET entitled: "DOCTOR BIRCHEMELL'S STRATEGY!") It's a treat of a yarn this, chums.)

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DEADSHOT DICK—alias Dr. Birchmell.